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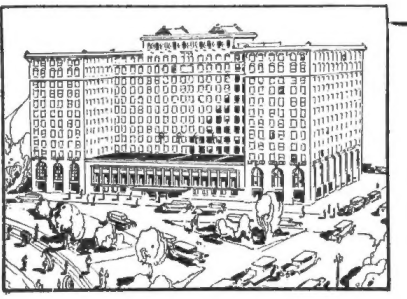

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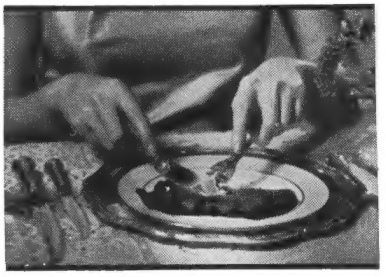

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GOOD MEN AND TRUE

By

PETER B. KYNE

A DRAFT of six men had just arrived from the recruit camp, and the corporal who delivered them had reported them to old Dad Keyes, first sergeant of A Company of the Mth United States Infantry. Dad Keyes glanced over the service records that accompanied the delivery and stepped outside his tent, where the six newcomers stood in formation, at ease, in the company street.

" 'Ten-shun!" said he.

Four of the new draft snapped into it, but two stood at ease, smoking and gazing at Dad Keyes somewhat sadly and impersonally.

"Shake your tails, you two," Dad urged, without animus. "Come to attention. Or don't you understand English?"

The two favored him with sweet smiles, but made no move to obey.

"You and you," Dad Keyes growled, driving an index finger into the midriff of each. "Three paces forward."

The pair lurched forward indifferently.

"Do you two speak English?"

Both rooks nodded.

"Conscientious objectors?" Dad pursued patiently.

Again both rooks nodded.

"How did you get 'em over here, Corporal?" the top queried of the recruit camp noncom. "They seem real rebellious."

"I tickled their tails with the bayonet, Sergeant."

"Good man! You men, attention to roll call!"

He read from the service records and discovered that one of the recalcitrants was Aloysius Patrick McNamara and the other Percival John Atlee. The top smiled a swordfish smile.

"Aloysius, are you a Catholic?" he queried gently.

"I am," came the reply in a deep Kerry brogue.

"I'll make a grand soldier boy out of you, Aloysius, before I'm through with you. You've the makings of a color sergeant in you. Percy, what are you in matters of faith?"

"I am an atheist," said Percy proudly.

"And each of you harbors conscientious objections to military service?"

"We do," said the pair in unison.

"There's nothing in the Presidential proclamation giving a legal status to conscientious objectors who are Catholics or atheists. If you two were Quakers, or Seventh Day Adventists, or Mennonites we'd know you were real conscientious objectors and find some work for you that wouldn't conflict with your ideals. Aloysius, what's your grouch against war?"

"I'll not serrve in an ar-r-my that's goin' to save England from annihilation."

"Good. An honest excuse. Percy, how about you?"

"War," said Percy, "is barbarous, uncivilized and settles nothing. I do not believe in war. I shall obey no military orders, and I am only wearing this hated uniform because my civilian clothes were forcibly taken from me."

"Yes, it gets cold nights in this camp, Percy. Well, follow me and I'll take you to the supply sergeant, who will issue blankets to you."

Privates McNamara and Atlee stepped forward with the rest.

"I didn't mean you two objectors," said Dad Keyes. "In this outfit your kind have to walk around at night to keep warm. I have no blankets and no tentage for you. Neither shall you eat until you've earned it. Dispose yourselves anywhere around camp. You can't get out, and I'm too busy to bother with you. When you're ready to soldier come and see me."

"Brute!" said Private Percy John Atlee.

"I'm just an old regular Army top-kicker, my son. I've seen a lot of shooting in my day and maybe it has brutalized me. *Quien sabe?*"

"Well, one thing you can't do me out of, and that's my pay."

Old Dad Keyes smiled.

"I'll have to tell that to the regimental summary court officer, when you're tried for disobedience of orders. He'll nip a month's pay off you as easy as I bite into my chewing tobacco."

"I've a notion," said Private McNamara, "to break the back of you in two halves, so I have!"

"You can't do that to a top sergeant, Mac. It's against the law. However, since you feel like working your grouch off on me, you shall fight my official executioner. Madison!"

A private reported on the jump. The top jerked a careless thumb at McNamara.

"He craves action, Madison. Unless prohibited he'll break my back in two halves. Take him over back of the supply company's barns and ask him to apologize."

The official executioner appeared pleased with the detail.

"What's run up his back, Top?" he queried, in the tone one employs when speaking of a dumb animal.

"He's Irish and he hates the English. He has conscientious scruples against serving in our Army because he thinks America is going to save his traditional enemy from annihilation."

There lay in Madison's hardboiled soul a touch of diabolical humor. He was an expert at insulting men to the point where they would attack him instantly. Moreover he saw no reason why he should bother to escort McNamara down back of the supply company's barn.

"Come on, you pup," he urged—and with the cry of a wounded wolf McNamara swung on him.

When the Irishman came to he was lying on his back in the company street and Private Percy John Atlee was bathing his brow with a handkerchief soaked

in cold water.

"Who are you?" McNamara demanded, being quite unable to recognize his comrade in rebellion by reason of the two black eyes Private Atlee sported.

"I'm Atlee. I dug in and tried to help you, but that man Madison was too much for us. He's too much for six ordinary men. He picked me to pieces after you were out of it."

"Faith, I'm thinkin' we've come to a rough shpot," McNamara mourned. "That top sergeant has a way with him the like o' which I've not seen in the recruit camp—an' we been there three months, wit' divil a man in aut'ority knowin' what to do to us or wit' us."

"He's one of these smiling, polite ruffians, Mac. All hell couldn't excite him. Well, he's got another thought coming if he thinks he can bend me to his will."

While they consoled each other Dad Keyes was telling the skipper all about it up in the orderly tent.

"Conscientious objectors, both, sir," he declared, "and both spoiling for a fight. McNamara wanted a battle for three reasons. First, he likes it; second, he holds grudges; and third, fighting comes natural to him. Atlee's a parlor pink; you can tell by his accent he's one of the cogna—cogna—what the hell do you call these superior people, sir?"

"The cognoscenti, Sergeant."

"That's it. Well, it would have done your heart good, sir, to see how loyal this particular cog is. He flew to the defense of McNamara like a drunkard to a barbecue."

"Do you think you can break them, Sergeant?"

"Of course. They'll probably never be worth a damn as soldiers, but I can train them to go through the motions."

ON THE night of their fourth day in the company both martyrs came to the top's tent, snapped into it and gave him a salute.

"I don't rate a salute," the top informed them gravely, "but if it's your purpose to show me how well you can come to attention and give a right-hand salute, then I'll say that neither of you know a thing about it. You stand at attention with all your muscles flexed and you salute with a silly snap, like a militiaman."

"We want blankets," announced Private McNamara and, as an afterthought, added, "sor."

"I don't rate a sir, either. Save that for the officers, Mac. Percy, what do you want?"

"I want something to eat—in a hurry, Sergeant."

The top considered this gravely, but said nothing.

"Well," rasped McNamara, "how about it?"

"Well, you've told me what you want, but you haven't asked me what I want, and when I say I, I mean the company commander. I'm his mouthpiece, you know."

"All right, I'll bite," said Private Atlee. "What do you want?"

"I want two obedient soldiers—two that I can't distinguish from the other two hundred and forty-seven enlisted men in this outfit."

"We'll soldier, sir," McNamara promised.

"Second the motion," said Private Atlee. "We've been buying some grub at the regimental canteen, but we went broke yesterday."

"Come with me, my brave lads," Dad Keyes urged.

He led the repentant pair to the kitchen. To the mess sergeant he said:

"I want you to give these two soldiers one nice big fat steak each, with cottage fried potatoes and onions. Special, understand. Captain's orders. And give them any other good grub you happen to have on hand. Tomorrow they eat company straight. They have reformed, and nobody's going to hold a grudge against them. They're two fine, sensible *hombres* and, if they mind their steps, I'm liable to recommend them for private first class." He laid a paternal hand on the shoulder of each. "No grudge, eh?"

They glowered at him but did not answer.

"Perhaps," the top suggested, "I expect too much too soon. So we'll let that pass. Eat hearty, and after you've eaten I'll have blankets and a cot for you in a tent. I grieved for you two

last night. It rained!"

From the kitchen the top walked over to the company commander's tent.

"Well, they've capitulated, sir, and I let them march out with the honors of war. But they've got something tucked away in the backs of their heads, and it'll turn up in due course."

While the company was in training camp, however, it failed to turn up. Dad noticed, however, that both men cultivated the society of the athletic sergeant and, in their spare moments, boxed a great deal. McNamara was clumsy, but fast, and those who boxed with him declared he carried a sock in each mitt. Atlee developed into a fast and crafty boxer, with a fair punch. Both trained faithfully, and at the end of their first four months in the service both entered the lists in the Divisional Boxing Tournament.

That tournament was, of course, an elimination contest. The unfit were weeded out the first night, but neither Madison, McNamara nor Atlee was among that number. The following night each fought twice, both in his class and slightly out of it, and again all three survived. On the third night Atlee drew McNamara.

"Now, watch these two, sir," Dad Keyes said to the skipper, who had a ringside seat. "McNamara will pull his punches and in the second round Atlee will take a dive. They wouldn't hurt each other for a farm. Atlee has one more man to fight, and if he wins that he'll draw Madison—and that's the bird he's after!"

And it was even so—to such an extent, indeed, that the assembled soldiery yelled, "Fake! Fake! Throw 'em out of the ring!" long before Private Atlee obligingly claimed a foul when McNamara tapped him gently three inches below the belt. Ordered to get up and continue fighting, Atlee did so, only to run into one on the jaw and curl up for the count. A little later in the evening he disposed of another opponent with such speed and ferocity that he was cheered as he left the ring. However, the judges were prejudiced against him, so the following night they threw him in with Madison.

That was a fight. Outweighed by several pounds, nevertheless Atlee fought like a tiger deprived of its prey. If he had only carried a knockout punch he would have won in the first round; but lacking that and depending solely on his superior skill, he had to be content with picking the sturdy Madison to pieces. He half closed both the latter's eyes, knocked out a tooth and, just before Madison tucked him away for the fatal ten, the face of the official executioner resembled a tropical sunset.

An hour later in the wind-up for the light-heavyweight divisional championship Madison stood at the top of his class; in the middleweight division McNamara stood at the top. He leaped into the ring.

"I challenge Madison for the light-heavyweight champeenship," he roared. "I'll give him the advantage o' weight an' lick him till his own mother wouldn't kiss him, the big clumsy ox!"

The challenge was carried to Madison, resting in the dressing tent.

"I licked him once. I can do it again," the latter declared, and went dancing out to the ring. McNamara greeted him with a terrible smile.

"Hah, ye fell for it, did ye? Sure, me little buddy, Atlee, wint in to soften ye for me—an' now I'll murrder ye entirely, so I will!"

And he did. He was doing such an excellent job of murder that the towel was sent in to save Madison from serious injury. With a howl of triumph McNamara skipped over to his corner, leaned down and said to his company commander:

"Ye'll have need for a new official executioner, sor. Let that lad shpeak out av his turrn from now on an' I'll shlay him."

He threw up his head.

"Hurr-oo-oo!" he yowled. "Hurr-oo-oo!"

"And there, sir," said old Dad Keyes, "we see a pair of conscientious objectors who would rather fight than eat."

The company commander concluded that, for two conscientious objectors, he had never seen two more courageous or vindictive fighters in all his life. He said as much to Dad Keyes, but Dad had nothing further to say. After twenty years a top sergeant he thought he knew

men, but now it appeared he did not. He only knew that the pair could hate, that they could and did hold a grudge and that they would carry their objective if humanly possible. He had beaten them, but he had not tamed them; he knew that while they were going through the motions of soldiering they had never relinquished their resolution to shed no blood.

Eventually he made up his mind that if the pair ever got to the Front they would make a prompt end of their military martyrdom by deserting to the enemy.

THE regiment, as was the custom in the early days of the American concentration, was schooled to trench warfare in a quiet sector. The Germans were not desirous of making an advance and the Americans were not ready; hence each side contented itself with a little sniping on the part of its sharpshooters, an occasional short and savage bombardment and little meeting engagements between patrols in No Man's Land at night. Excitement ran high, but casualties were few.

The terrain interested old Dad Keyes greatly. Long and carefully he studied it through a trench periscope. The trench occupied by A Company extended northwest and southeast across a little valley and disappeared in the wooded hills on both sides. Through the center of the valley ran a small creek about fifteen feet deep and lined on both banks with a thick growth of willows. This creek channel cut through A Company's trench, and while in all probability it was a roaring torrent in the rainy season, in mid-Summer the barest trickle of water ran down its sandy bed on the day when old Dad prowled up it for about a hundred yards, seeking a favorable spot to locate a listening post.

The company commander was afraid of that creek, for it offered excellent cover for a raiding party's advance.

The German position was parallel to the American trench some six hundred yards distant. Like the American trench, it was well protected by a heavy belt of barbed wire; the fact that the middle ground was a treacherous marsh gave additional protection.

One day the company commander secured some photographs of the enemy position on his front and he and the top studied them carefully.

"They haven't a trench," the top decided. "There's a road built across that marsh, an dirt has been taken out with a steam shovel along the far side of the right of way and piled up about fifteen feet to raise the road well above the level of the marsh. In the pit beyond the road there's a whole company of machine guns. See, sir, these little black dots. Each dot is a gun, and they're spaced evenly across the valley, dug into positions on the far edge of the road. Here to the left is that round wooded knoll, and to the left of that knoll is the stone culvert.

"The creek that bisects our trench runs under that culvert. After the culvert has been crossed the road turns at right angles and wanders away upcountry close to the base of the westerly line of hills. Even if that road, which now offers natural shelter to the enemy, had been prolonged to go straight over the hills I doubt if that sector of the hills visible on this side would be held by infantry. Because of the steepness of it and the thick woods and undergrowth any attack would be very slow and could be taken care of by a gun or two on the top of this little wooded knoll that sticks up out of the terrain here. The road passes in back of it and then emerges to cross the stone culvert."

"Meaning what?" the company commander asked.

"Meaning that a platoon of ours might be able to sneak up the creek unobserved to the flank of that little round wooded knoll. We'd undoubtedly meet an enemy outpost in the creek, for they must know its strategic value and will guard against our raids coming up the creek. However, a clever party could stalk that outpost and destroy it with hand grenades, and if this was done at a time when our artillery was putting over some early morning hate, the little ruckus in the creek might go unnoticed by the machine gun crew on top of the wooded knoll. In the darkness the platoon might creep on up the

creek to the base of the knoll without being discovered, climb out and into the timber. A quiet stalk uphill through this timber—a shower of hand grenades —and the gun would be ours."

"And then what, Sergeant?"

"The enemy would never suspect a platoon to attack that strong point unsupported, or as an isolated unit not acting in concert as part of a general attack. Once we had that German machine gun we could turn it and bring under fire, one after the other, every other gun of that company dug in behind the road. A very simple flanking movement."

"Yes, one might do that with very few casualties, while the casualties of the enemy would be very heavy. One might even destroy that defending machine gun unit. But after we'd taken that terrain, what good would it be to us? The position behind that dirt fill thrown up to make the road is too open and unprotected; as soon as it was discovered we had it the Heinies would bring such a bombardment down on it your platoon would be annihilated."

"Well, the enemy now occupies it, all open and unprotected as it is against our field artillery fire, sir."

"True—but we haven't turned the hose on them yet, Sergeant. No general advance is contemplated in this sector, and the enemy knows that. That's why the sector is held with machine guns instead of infantry. Machine guns in the event of our attacking mean far less casualties to the Germans, but frightful casualties among our attacking troops. No, Sergeant, we'll just be neighborly and leave those machine guns alone. When we advance against that position it will only be after our artillery has just about plowed up that earth fill you call a road—and we'll walk in behind that curtain of fire."

"They're a great temptation to a man," Dad Keyes mourned sadly. "It's a grand 'jump in-jump out' proposition if one wanted to be dirty and give those Germans a sample of American audacity and initiative. Captain, I tell you, sir, if the deal was pulled off carefully a platoon could occupy that little knoll and control the sector before you could say Jack Robinson. You could be into them like making a polite morning call. And that creek would screen us and protect us coming and going."

"Probably. But we're going to get all the adventure we need without looking for it. Why stir up a beehive?"

BUT old Dad Keyes was strangely persistent, perhaps because he had been a top sergeant twenty years, and such, as is well known, have privileges in addition to their rights.

"I think, sir," he said, "we ought to put a double outpost in the creek bed at night, sir. A raiding party coming down the creek might kill one man, but the other man might escape to give the alarm. If one man fell asleep we could trust the other to keep awake."

The captain was a trifle nettled at the old soldier's persistence. He did not relish such a plethora of advice from a noncommissioned officer, but inasmuch as he was very fond of Dad Keyes he merely turned without replying and walked off down the trench. Patiently the old noncom followed him into the company dugout headquarters.

"I beg the Captain's pardon," he then said respectfully. "It was farthest from my mind to hand the company commander out a lot of free advice. I was talking for the benefit of others."

"And who might they be, Sergeant?"

"Those rascally conscientious objectors, Atlee and McNamara. I was planting an idea in their heads. Did you not see them, sir, leaning against the trench and listening to every word between us. I could see by the light in McNamara's eyes that the idea had taken root. That's why I was so careful to explain the lay o' the land—how a platoon of ours could prowl up that creek and be into the enemy before the enemy suspected it."

"But what's the big idea, Keyes?"

"The big idea, insofar as those monkeys are concerned, is to put them on the double outpost in the creek bottom from two to four tomorrow morning. Do that, sir—and I ask it as a favor—and Atlee and McNamara will jog right on up that creek and surrender to the German outpost they think they'll run into say a hundred yards in front of

the German position. They heard me say there was bound to be a German outpost in the creek, the same as ours. As a matter of fact, sir, there isn't."

The captain stared hard at his first sergeant.

"How do you know there isn't?"

"Because I prowled up that creek between daylight and dark this morning to see if there was. There wasn't. And I climbed out of that creek and into the timber at the foot of the wooded knoll and nobody shot at me. I slipped from tree to tree clear to the crest of that knoll and got close enough to the machine gun nest there to kick the backside of one Heinie, if I'd wanted to."

"You ancient devil! Sergeant Keyes, no more of that. You're too old and too valuable to play the goat like that, for the mere sake of excitement and curiosity."

The old soldier laughed.

"The situation fascinates me, sir. They don't keep an outpost in the creek, because from the hilltop they have an excellent view of two hundred yards of it. They figure they could hear an attack coming up the creek and annihilate it, even at night, with machine gun fire. They have the angle of fire plotted."

"Then why this wild talk about the ease of taking a platoon up there?"

"To impress those two renegades—if so be they have it in their minds to desert. They'll figure that if a platoon could get up there unnoticed, two men could do it as quiet as a pair of mice."

"Then, Sergeant, am I to understand that you wish to test Atlee and McNamara, by placing them both on outpost?"

"Yes, sir, and from four to six. They'll leave late and walk up the creek boldly, well knowing that if the machine gunners on top of the hill see them they'll not open fire, but wait and watch the precious pair walk into their arms. To pick up a couple of prisoners that easy makes a raid, with its attendant casualties, unnecessary."

"And you think these two men wish to desert?"

"I don't know what they wish to do, but a stranger pair I've never known. They have the courage to do anything, but loyal and enthusiastic soldiers they are not. They're licked but not conquered. And I have to find out."

The captain grinned.

"Well, you make out the outpost details, Keyes, so fix the trap to suit yourself."

"I thank the Captain."

TEN minutes before the corporal escorted Privates Atlee and McNamara up the creek, old Dad Keyes slipped from the trench down into the sandy creek bed and started upstream. He kept to the soft sand along the edges, feeling his way carefully and counting his steps. Necessarily they were very short steps. From time to time a Very light arched into the sky and lighted his way, and at such times he marched with confidence, knowing, by reason of his previous reconnaissance, that up to a certain point he was invisible from the front and both flanks.

When he reached that point he sat down, smoked a cigaret and fell to pondering what he would do with his life after he retired on three-quarters pay, following thirty years of service. Like all old soldiers and sailors, he had a fancy for the chicken business, and while he was considering the initial investment and contrasting the excellencies of White Leghorns as opposed to Buff Orpingtons or Black Minorcas, somebody sneezed a little way down the creek.

Dad Keyes glanced at his watch.

"Light in half an hour," he decided. "They're too eager. Don't the fools know they'd do better to wait for full daylight."

He flattened up against the bank and listened to the stealthy approach of heavily shot feet. They would advance a little, pause, listen and advance again. In a moment of silence Dad Keyes said, very distinctly—

"Vas iss dass?"

"Amerikaner! Kamerad," Atlee and McNamara replied as softly.

Dad Keyes knew both men believed they had stumbled across an enemy listening post. He said, in English with a Weber & Fields accent:

"Ach! You vos deserding already, eh, vat?"

"Sure, we're deserting," whispered Atlee.

"Vat's der madder, poys? Don'd dey feed you noddings?"

"Grub's O. K, but we don't want to fight the Germans."

"Ach, dod iss goot. You vas goot fellers, both of you. Pass kvietly up der creeg, counding shtebs to five hundred. Und make no noise—udderwise a machine gun geds you, huh? Vorwart, march, und no monkey pusiness, or py Yiminy I let you haf a hand grenade."

"T'ank you, sor," McNamara murmured. "Faith, ye're a scholar an' a gintleman. Where did ye learrn to speak English, sor?"

"In St. Louis vonce for ten years I haf been a vaiter in a rathskeller. Vorwart—und kviet, I entread you, comrades."

They stole past him on velvet feet into the darkness, and the top followed. From time to time he said audibly:

"Shush! Shush!"

Having walked five hundred steps, the deserters halted and whispered that there was a small tree down across their course. This was no news to First Sergeant Keyes, since he had laid it there himself as a marker.

"Kviet, now," he whispered hoarsely. "Climb the creeg out by der low bank by der left und lie down kviet in der brushes. Ven comes der daylight I vill go vorwart und announce der wisitors."

"Ain't you afraid you'll get hell for leavin' your post?" Atlee whispered.

"Nein! It is my dooty to leaf it at dis hour. Ve do nod a post maintain in der creeg in daylight. Shlip in dere, now, poys, lie down und make no noises. Shleeb a cubble o' vinks, if you vant to. It's all righd by me."

"That lad's a good egg," McNamara murmured to Atlee. "A hell av a fine job they'd give us, killin' a good lad like this fella."

He stretched out in the grass, buried his head in his folded arms and, eyes closed, waited for dawn and deliverance from the horrors of war. They heard their guide wriggle off to the left flank and lie down with a sigh.

Slowly the murk gave way to the pre-dawn gray; the gray was routed before the first heralds of sunup—and McNamara and Atlee looked around for the neighborly German who was to lead them unscathed, doubtless by some secret path uphill through the dense woods, to his officers. To their horror they saw First Sergeant Keyes leaning against a tree, chewing tobacco and gazing benignly down upon them. He had his automatic in his right hand and a Mills grenade in the left, and slung over his shoulder was a canvas bag containing many extra grenades.

"Vell, poys," he greeted them in his Weber & Fields accent, "iff dis ain'd a fine morning for a funeral I hope I don'd ever see again der back of my neck. You vas crazy to be captured, ain'd it? Vell ve shall go vorwarts—mitoud noise—und on der crest of dis hill ve shall make der Heinies' acquaintance."

"Oh, my God," Atlee whispered, and buried his nose in the dirt.

He shuddered. McNamara said:

"Top, may the divil fly away wid you if he only flew a mile a day. Are ye for killin' us for deserterrs?"

Dad Keyes looked extremely sorrowful.

"Oh, Mac, you do me wrong. I wouldn't dream of such waste of excellent fighting material. And, by the way, speak very softly. We're only a hundred yards from the enemy, so don't get excited and pipe up."

Private Atlee rolled over, rested his puzzled head in his hand, with his elbow on the ground, and made keen, but not frightened, appraisal of their Nemesis.

"I see," he murmured. "Going to take us back to the trench and have us shot for desertion in time of war. It's the same penalty for deserting one's post in the presence of the enemy until properly relieved. You fixed it, of course, to have a noncom crawl up to our post at five-thirty to see if we were there. You and that noncom—two witnesses—enough. Over the river for us, Mac. When the top does a job he does it!"

"Percy, you're a very intelligent young man—so intelligent, indeed, that I marvel at your stupidity. You two figured, of course, on being exchanged when the war is over and coming back with a cock-and-bull story about having

been overpowered by a German raiding party. That's why you brought your rifles along with you."

"It's a story that should wash, Sergeant."

"You failed to take me into consideration. Therein lay your stupidity. And you failed to reflect on the horrors of a German prison camp, where men die by inches. Hasn't it dawned on you birds that I planted the plan of escape in your fool heads, when I saw you were listening to the skipper and me discussing the possibilities of a successful attack with a platoon in this terrain. I've never detailed you two to outpost together before. And that didn't make you suspicious?"

"Sergeant, you're a devil!"

"An' the great-great-gran'father o' divils," McNamara added. "'Tis well for ye, Top, ye have the dhrop on us now, else I'd kill ye as I would a wasp."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't. You're not the killer type. You're just a wild, contrary, stubborn Irishman, hanging to a national ideal you were born with and which won't work in this man's Army. As for you, Atlee, you're just a crazy intellectual with the swelled head. You like to fancy yourself an idealist, too, and smarter than all the rest of the world. What I like about both of you is that you have the guts to play out your hands. So, for that, I'm not going to have you face a firing squad for desertion or abandonment of your post."

THE light of a great idea dawned in Atlee's intelligent face.

"I see. You're going to take us home and report to the skipper that you relieved us and took us along with you on a little reconnaissance detail."

"Son," Dad answered sadly, "I can't take you home—now. The last two hundred yards of that creek bed we traveled is open to German observation and can be taken under machine gun fire. And we're inside the German wire and can't hope to get back traveling in the open. That is, traveling alone."

"Then we're to hide here until dark and go back?"

The top sighed deeply, and McNamara turned fiercely and faced his buddy.

"Man, have you no brains, you that speak Frinch an' know algebry an' triggeronmy, you that wint to college an' should be an officer this instant instid av a lousy private? Can ye not see t'rough a ladder? 'Tis the top's intintion to make us stalk the gun on top av this crest, take it an' bring it back to him. The way home by the creek will thin be safe, we'll have fought ourselves out av a dirrty scrape, an' 'tis himself be laughin' at us. Certain death if we don't do it, possible death if we do. Oh-ho, oh-ho! Paddy, hit the drum! An' Kitty, bar the dhure."

"I knew you were the brains of your two-man organization, Mac. When you and Atlee fought in the divisional boxing tournament it was with the hope that you'd last long enough for each of you to have a go at Madison. How you worked and trained for that chance! And it came. When you had to fight Atlee for a chance in the finals you pulled your punches and he took a dive. Later he softened Madison for you before Madison put him out; then you tangled with Madison in the finals and murdered him. Why, you two bucks are just bulging with strategy and grand tactics. It's a pity you're such rotten soldiers. I could cry over you two."

He bit into his plug of chewing tobacco.

"And it wouldn't do a bit of good for you to kill me, Mac. I left a note for the company commander, to be opened if I did not return. Make it all the worse for you when the war was over and you two exchanged. That is, provided you survived the German prison camp."

Atlee and McNamara exchanged glances. Said Atlee—

"Mac, we've not only crawled into a dirty hole but we've dragged the hole in after us."

"There's an openin' at the other ind av that hole, Perrcy, lad. Are you comin' wit' us, Top? Mayhap there's a medal av honor on top av the hill for ye."

Old Dad Keyes ran a soiled finger over the rows of ribbons on his sur-

prisingly clean blouse.

"This one is for the Spanish War, Mac. The next for the Filipino Insurrection, the next for the Boxer campaign, an' this blue one with the little white stars—that's the Medal of Honor. I won it in the Samar campaign—that's this ribbon." He pointed to the second row. "The next is the Mindanao campaign, when we chased Datto Ali; this next is the punitive campaign into Mexico, and if I live there'll just be space enough for this campaign an' the two rows of ribbons will be even. I've had a bellyfull of fighting in my day and would avoid it for the future if I could, seeing as how I'm to be retired next December. Chickens are my hobby, Mac, and it was my intention to send you up alone. Two good men can turn the trick if they're careful.

"However," he continued, "an oak leaf on the blue ribbon wouldn't look bad, would it? And it might help me to the chevrons of a staff sergeant, and higher pay when I retire. I believe I'll go with you. You've both been trained on German machine guns. You, McNamara, will fire the gun and you, Atlee, will feed it. There'll be opportunity for me to prove they didn't give me the rifle championship of the Army for nothing. Let's go. I smell hot food. They'll be having breakfast, with one man on lookout."

"An' him indifferent, waitin' for his share o' the grub an' wondherin' will the other blackguards lave him enny." McNamara counted the grenades in his belt. "Come on, Perrcy. Let's go. 'Tis agin me code an' that av me people, but beggars can't be choosers."

Private Atlee stood up and felt of a hand grenade in each pocket. Silently Dad Keyes handed him two extra.

"Well, we have a soldier to lead us," Atlee murmured. "Come on, Mac."

"Noncommissioned officers walk in the rear of the line," Dad Keyes reminded them. "Flunk it and I'll kill you both with my Service automatic and tackle the job alone. Fan out—and creep from tree to tree. Remember, you're stalking big and dangerous game!"

Up the hill they wriggled, bearing to the right, gradually circling, in order to come upon the gun crew slightly from the rear. The trees were thick on that slope and there was very little underbrush. They were within twenty feet of the gun crew when Dad Keyes walked out and held up a hand grenade. The crew, taken by surprise as they squatted at their meal, stared at him dumbly.

Dad Keyes raised both arms suggestively.

"Nix com arous," he cried low but sharp. He tapped his mouth, enjoining absolute silence as the hands of the crew went skyward and their corporal cried, "*Kamerad!*"

Atlee and McNamara came out of the bush, and Dad Keyes reached into his shirt and tossed out a handful of short lengths of cord.

"Tie 'em up, lads," he ordered. "Then tear pieces off their shirts and stuff their mouths."

Then to the prisoners—

"Lie face downward, you!"

Evidently one of them understood English, for promptly he set the example and the others followed. In five minutes all were tied and gagged.

"Ain't he the grand soger man?" McNamara cried pridefully. "Divil a shot fired an' not a casualty in the attackin' foorce. Sure, that's what comes av havin' a competent an' experienced leader."

THE sergeant crept down over the crest and, screened by a tree, made a survey of the terrain. Below him and flanking the east side of the crest the earth-filled road ran; behind it, spaced at regular intervals behind the fill and a little bit below it, six machine guns stood in position, with a man at each. Down in the ditch from which the earth had been taken to make the road, the remainder of the machine gun company squatted around steaming kettles. On the wire out in front an American battery was languorously tossing high explosive, to which the men in the road ditch paid not the slightest attention.

Dad came back to the gun.

"You, McNamara, pick up that gun. We'll move it to a new position. The angle of fire here isn't good. Atlee, drape yourself with belts of ammunition. I'll do the same, and we'll each

carry an extra box."

"Good mit uns," McNamara murmured piously.

Like every Irishman who ever lived he had a natural flair for intrigue. To be sly, to be tricky, to outsmart somebody else and, incidentally, to dramatize himself, was incense to his soul.

"Begorry," he added, "I've a notion I'm goin' to enjoy this."

"I'm not," Atlee spoke up. "I'm sorry for those poor devils. A war never settled anything, and if people would only refuse to go to war to make fortunes for the capitalists, there wouldn't be any war. However, I'll not let it be said that when I had to do a job I failed to do a good one."

They took up a position farther down the slope, almost at the side of the road, and behind a screen of low bushes. McNamara lay prone, traversed the gun, tested its elevating mechanism and clucked with satisfaction when he noticed the waterjacket was quite full. Atlee fed him a belt of ammunition, and McNamara, grinning pridefully, looked up at Dad Keyes for orders.

"The group around the kettle back of the nearest gun, Mac. Never mind the gunner on duty. I'll take care of him. Slow and easy, lad. Short bursts —and don't get excited and waste your shots. When you've cleaned the first bunch shift to the next, and so on."

The gun commenced its staccato bark. The dirt flew up ten feet in front of the bunched Germans. McNamara raised the gun a minute fraction, and the men went down like grain before a mowing knife. Simultaneously Dad Keyes topped the man at the gun, and passed on to the next gunner. These two shots at battle sight. Then he raised to four hundred, to five hundred, to six, to seven—and back to four to help McNamara, who was now working on the third group, which had scattered. Two of them got to the gun, turned it and fired a short burst that went high over the heads of the attackers. Dad Keyes downed them.

"The fifth group next," he ordered quietly. "The distant groups can't take us under fire without chancing shooting into the nearer groups. And I doubt if they have us located."

A brief pause while Atlee fed another beltful of ammunition. Two short bursts—

"Cease firing," came old Dad's stentorian voice. "They all want to surrender."

And, indeed, they did. The distant groups had scattered out into the ditch and with arms upraised were shouting—

"Kamerad."

Dad Keyes's fast and accurate shooting had accounted for every man who managed to get to a gun—and now no others would try, although three guns had fired one short burst each and thrown much dirt over the attackers.

"Glory be to heaven," McNamara crooned, "that's over. I'm fair sick at me stummick, so I am—an' a bullet t'rough me left shouldher to boot."

Atlee was lying face down beside the gun. Dad Keyes limped over and rolled him face upward. Atlee smiled.

"Through the right breast, Top. It don't hurt much," he sputtered, with red foam on his lips. "Where do we go from here?"

"I've a hole in my thigh," Dad complained, "but I can walk a bit if I try hard." He started up the hill. "Put a burst over their heads, Mac, if they pull their arms down," he called.

He pawed over the bound and gagged gun crew on top of the hill and removed the gag from the one he suspected understood English.

"You speak English?" he demanded.

"I do."

Dad unbound him.

"Hustle right downhill to your comrades and tell them to form column of squads and march up here, keeping under cover and carrying their machine guns. They're to leave the wounded, but I'll let one man escape to carry word to your medical corps. Tell them to bring two stretchers with them. Quick. Double-time! March!"

THE German scuttled directly downhill through the timber, crossed the road and dived into the ditch, shouting as he came. Sharp orders drifted up to the attackers on the slope, and they could see the enemy forming up in column of squads, while details picked

up the guns and joined them. Up the long ditch they came, and when they were opposite McNamara he kept his gun on them and Dad Keyes cried—

"Halt!"

The little column halted.

"Unbuckle your belts and drop all sidearms as you stand."

The order was obeyed.

"You man that speaks English," Dad called, "come up here and turn your comrades loose and have them join the column." He turned to McNamara. "Mac, your legs are O. K. Sort out a couple of grenades and walk down to that bunch and inspect them for mischief—the officer particularly and the noncoms. Those birds don't quit without a struggle. See that there are no grenades, trench knives, potato mashers, bayonets, swords or pistols clinging to them. If anybody starts something lob a couple of grenades into them. I'll back you with the machine gun." He slid in behind the sights and traversed the gun.

The captured gun crew came down the hill, hands uplifted, and joined the waiting column—all save two men, who at Dad Keyes's command, remained behind to carry the gun they had lost.

"All ready, Sergeant," McNamara called up.

"Send up for men and two stretchers, Mac."

When this detail arrived old Dad had Private Atlee loaded into one. Then he sat up in the other, a hand grenade in each hand, and took position at the tail of the column.

"March on the flank, McNamara," he commanded, "and keep your eyes open. Forward! March!"

At the stone culvert they obliqued off the road and down into the creek bed, passed under the culvert and headed down the creek. As the head of the column of prisoners approached the point where Dad knew his own company outpost would be he shouted to the outpost, for he feared they would toss a few grenades into the head of the column before retreating to their trench

McNamara was howling a war song in Gaelic as the column emerged from the creek and turned, column left, into A Company's trench. The skipper popped out of his dugout and stared, and Dad Keyes, sitting aloft on the stretcher borne on the shoulders of two prisoners, raised his hand in "the big figure four."

"Sir," he said, "First Sergeant Keyes reports with fifty-eight prisoners and Privates Atlee and McNamara, seven machine guns and a blanket full of sundry small arms."

"Sergeant," said the skipper, "I'm mad enough to bust you to private. So you pulled off that raid anyhow!"

"With the valuable aid of Atlee and McNamara, sir. I picked them up on the outpost before daylight and took them along with me, because I was on a job that required good fighting men. I have the greatest pleasure in reporting them both for great gallantry in action. Both are wounded, but maybe Atlee won't die. He's only shot through the right lung."

The German prisoners set the wounded sergeant down, and he stood for a moment over Private Atlee and watched him.

The skipper smiled. Atlee smiled back at him and murmured:

"Got my little red badge of courage, sir—and you'll have to get a new top for a month or two. I'm glad. Maybe he'll stay in hospital—till—the war's over. Good old Dad!"

The skipper shook his hand and passed on to McNamara, whose head hung low like a sheep-killing dog. He shook the Irishman's hand; he passed on and placed an arm affectionately around his top sergeant.

"God," he said reverently, "I command an outfit! Three Medal of Honor men! I'm prouder than hell!"

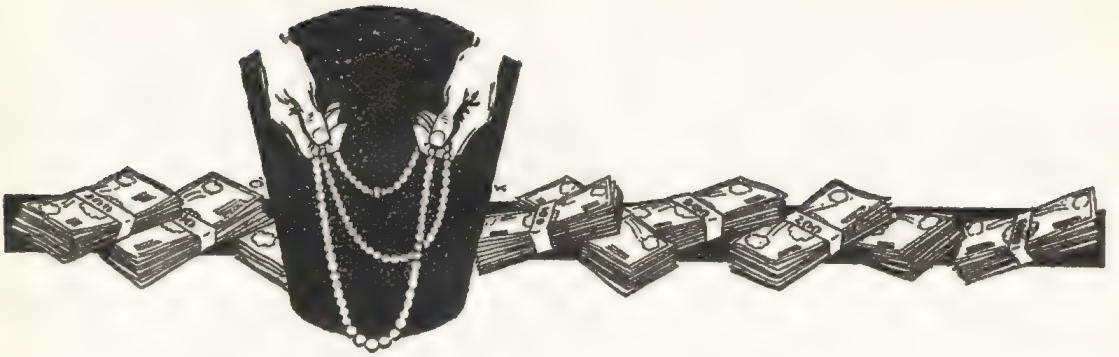
McNamara leaned weakly up against the trench and raised the shrill battle cry of the A. E. F—

"Gangway f'r combat troops!"

Atlee spat out a mouthful of blood.

"When do we eat?" he piped feebly.

"Good men, good men," Dad Keyes whispered to the skipper. "All they needed was the right handling. They've got religion now. They've been blooded. How about a little shot of rum, sir? We all could do with it."



A SCRIPTURAL QUOTATION

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

McTAVISH, heavy jawed and heavy browed, sat at the desk in his private office and scowled at his immaculately clad visitor.

"And what's your business with me, Mr. Killacky?" he demanded.

"It's about those pearls stolen from your wife last night when your car was held up."

The broker's gaze narrowed.

"What d'you mean?"

"Why, I have them!" said Killacky with a cheerful smile. His lean, high boned features were almost jaunty when he smiled, and his dark eyes had a most irresponsible twinkle.

"I know exactly what happened, you see," he went on with a wave of his cigaret. "The pearl necklace was stolen —true. I have it now. And wouldn't you be a wild man if I turned them in to the police? You've got about a hundred thousand coming, provided those pearls stay lost or are destroyed. In today's market you couldn't sell 'em for a fraction of that. A hundred thousand would save your business, eh? Insurance is a grand thing, McTavish, a grand thing!"

As he listened to these words, which must have beat upon his brain like so many hammers, McTavish slowly lost his ruddy hue, becoming paler and paler.

"Who the devil are you?" he rasped.

"An expert in gems, if you like." Killacky rose, took out his handkerchief and from it held up a shimmering string of pearls; then he put the necklace away again. "You see?" he asked gaily. "Ocular proof. I have them. I'll be back here at ten in the morning, McTavish, after the banks open. If you want to give a thousand cash for the pearls we may make a deal."

McTavish growled an oath.

"This is blackmail!"

"Tut, tut!" said Killacky. "I might turn over the pearls to the insurance people. I think they were insured with Harrison, Limited? Yes, I might do that at once—"

"No!" exclaimed McTavish, who was watching him intently. "No."

Killacky smiled.

"I thought you'd hardly desire that. Shall we say ten in the morning?"

"Yes," growled the broker.

Killacky nodded.

"Right. You're smart enough to play the game squarely. There's no possible

way you can beat me out and get clear. Doublecross me, and you'll feel like the devil with a drop of holy water on his tail! It's to your advantage to play square."

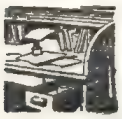
McTavish looked grim.

"Suppose you doublecross me?"

"Why?" demanded Killacky. "I don't want the insurance people on my heels any more than you want 'em on yours, do I?"

"That's true," said McTavish, and his face cleared. "I'll have the cash ready."

Mr. Killacky waved his hand jauntily and departed through the outer offices of the brokerage firm to the elevators and the eddying winds of La Salle Street, in Chicago's Loop.



AT TEN on the following morning he sent in his name to McTavish. He was ushered into the broker's private office, a large and airy corner room. McTavish sat at the desk by the window. He leaned back and surveyed his visitor grimly.

"I've thought over your remarks; they were sound," he said abruptly. "As a straight business deal, we both profit by this transaction."

"So it seems," agreed Killacky, lighting a cigaret. "Once the pearls are destroyed the only evidence is gone."

McTavish nodded. He opened the top drawer of his desk and left it open. From it he took a sheaf of notes which he shoved across the desk.

"A thousand in centuries. Suit you?"

Killacky smiled and placed them in an inner pocket. The dark gaze of McTavish leaped with quick darting flame, but he veiled his feelings instantly.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, as Killacky hauled forth the necklace, "a shame to destroy it, eh?"

"Precisely my thought." Killacky looked down at the shimmering globules, pouring them from one hand to the other, watching them glimmer with soft radiance in the morning sunlight. "Matched pearls like these are devilish rare. I should have asked you ten thousand, eh?"

He smiled a little, ignoring the broker's outstretched hand and eager eyes.

"By the way," he went on, "be careful how you destroy them, if you do so. Acid won't do it. Every layer of nacre contains a thin membrane which acid doesn't digest. You must remove every trace. Those insurance people are hell on crooks, you know."

McTavish laughed harshly and motioned impatiently with his hand.

"Simple ways are best," he said. "I'll show you."

With a shrug Killacky dropped the string of pearls into the broker's hand.

McTavish grunted, swept from the desk a large sheet of hard bond paper and stooped. He laid the paper on the strip of cement between the wall and the desk. On the paper he heaped the string of shimmering pearls, then smashed down his heel, again and again, with savage energy.

Killacky leaned back and puffed negligently at his cigaret.

The broker did not pause until the beautiful things had been crushed into a heap of glinting dust and tiny fragments. From this heap came a faint radiance, as if in mournful memory of the beauty and luster that was no more.

McTavish carefully picked up the sheet of paper and folded it once, into a little trough. He laid aside the knotted string and fastener, then rose. In the next instant he had emptied the contents of the paper out of the open window; they disappeared instantly.

Closing the window and moving rapidly, McTavish put the string and attached catch on the paper, rolled it up into a ball and struck a match. He held the flame to the paper, which was lying on the windowsill. In silence, careless of scorched varnish, he watched it consume. When it was nearly gone, he suddenly shoved it out of the window.

"There!" He slammed the window, turned, resumed his seat. His face was alight with a blazing triumph which he made no attempt to hid. "Suits you, does it?"

"Admirably done," said Killacky. "Even if the insurance people heard all about it, they could not possibly find an atom of conviction."

"So I thought," said McTavish.

His hand slipped into the open drawer and came up with a pistol. He covered Killacky and spoke sharply.

"Hands in your lap! One move, and I'll kill you! What's more, it'd be justifiable homicide!"

He meant the words. He would do exactly as he said. Killacky spat the cigaret from his lips and sat motionless.

"What do you mean by this?" he demanded calmly.

"I mean, damn you, that no cheap crook can put anything over on me!" snapped McTavish, and he dipped his free hand into the desk drawer. Out on the mahogany he dropped a necklace of pearls, then he surveyed Killacky with grim exultation. "Two detectives are outside now, awaiting my summons."

"Really?" asked Killacky, his brows lifting. "And what has that necklace got to do with all this rigmarole?"

"It's a duplicate, a replica of the real necklace. It was known that you called here yesterday afternoon. You came, demanded cash, returned this morning and gave me this replica. You have the thousand dollars in your pocket."

"Oh! Marked money, eh?"

"Precisely." McTavish sneered. "But I'm an honest man; you're a crook. You thought you'd palm off these replicas on me and keep the real pearls, eh?"

"That's your story, eh?" Killacky whistled softly. "Faith, I knew you were a smart man, but devil take me if I thought you were this smart!"

"No, your cheap brain wouldn't jump that far," returned the other acidly. "Either you're the bandit who held up me and my wife, or an accomplice."

It was clever, devilish clever, thought Killacky. The broker, having destroyed the real pearls, now had nothing to fear. Killacky's story would not be credited for a moment.

"With the real pearls gone, your scheme is airtight," said Killacky quietly. "Suppose I give in. What do you want to let me off?"

"You don't get off," snapped McTavish. "I'm going to teach you to monkey with my type of man, understand? I've explained matters so you'll comprehend just how you've ridden to a fall. All you cheap crooks can see in a deal is to get your money and blow it."

"And you, being honest, see farther?"

"You bet."

KILLACKY sighed.

"You know good and well that with the real pearls gone, they'll never be produced. You're sure of the insurance. You get me put away—"

"Come to think of it, you look like that bandit," put in McTavish with a grim smile.

"You won't consider anything? If I paid—"

"I'll consider nothing except to see you behind the bars!"

The broker put out a hand to the buzzer on his desk. The office door opened and a secretary appeared.

"Send in those two men," snapped McTavish.

A moment later two men, obviously detectives, entered the room.

"Arrest this man, Officers," exclaimed McTavish firmly. "He's either the bandit who held up me and my wife the other night, or an accomplice. He was here yesterday, as I told you, and demanded money for the return of my wife's pearls. He came today, took a thousand dollars in marked bills—you men marked the bills yourselves—and then had the impudence to give me this!"

McTavish held up the replica of the necklace.

"A fake. Imitation pearls," he added.

"Just as you figured it out, huh?" said one of the two detectives, advancing. "Stand up, you! Why—"

He paused, as did his companion. Killacky rose with a slight smile and nodded.

"Hello, boys," he said. "Better search me at once. I'll save you the trouble. Here's the money." He drew it out, extending the sheaf of notes.

"Here!" cried McTavish, staring at the three. "What's all this? Arrest him, you two!"

One of the two men grinned.

"Not yet, sir! There must be some mistake. This is Mr. Killacky, of Harrison, Limited—their chief investigator, sir."

McTavish took a step back, sank into his chair, and the blood went out of his face. Killacky turned to him with a smile.

"Quite so, McTavish," he observed lightly. "You see, we nabbed the actual bandit; but his remarkable story of having been put up to the job by you had not an atom of proof. We wanted proof in order to prosecute you. Now I fancy we have it in this marked money which you so kindly furnished."

"What? What?" stammered the broker. "It's all a damned lie! You gave me this replica of the necklace—there are no real pearls—"

Killacky grinned.

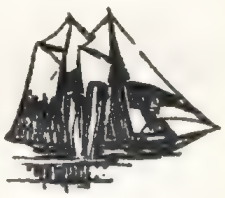
"As a matter of fact, I did give you a replica," he said. "You were so damned anxious to destroy the pearls that you never examined them or the fragments. If you had, you'd have seen that they were glass and fishskin, not nacre! And here," he added, putting his hand in his pocket and drawing out another necklace, "are the real pearls."

McTavish stood as if frozen. His eyes were incredulous, staring, horrified. Killacky strode to the door and turned.

"By the way," he observed cheerfully, "you may recall the literary allusion which links pearls and swine? An interesting volume, McTavish. I'll send you a copy to while away your hours behind the bars. Take good care of him, Officers. See you in court, Mac! So long."

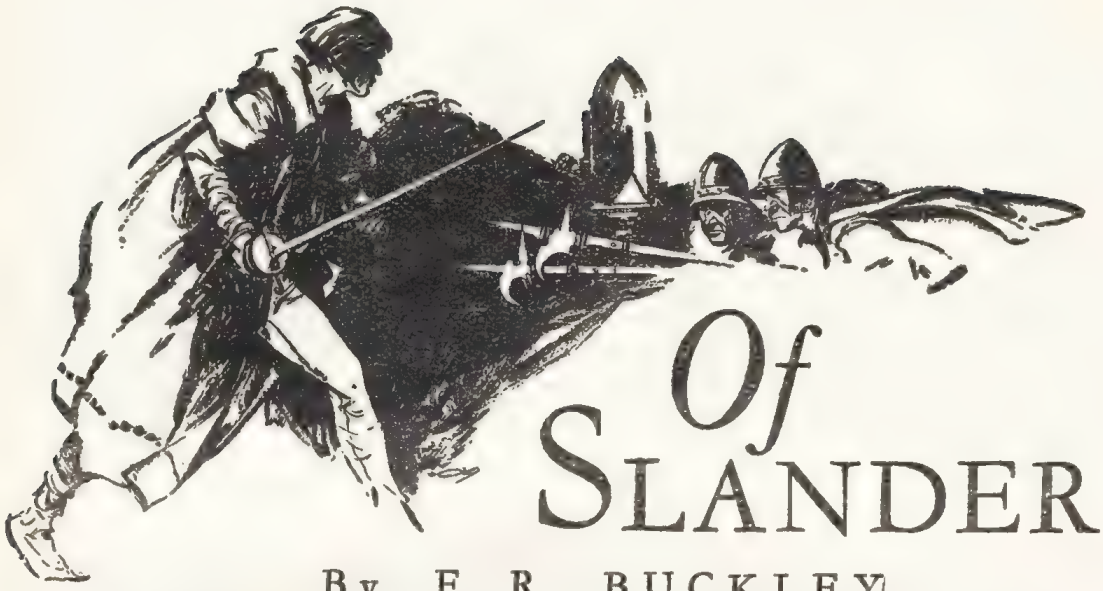
McTavish made no response.

Sea-Destined



By HARRY KEMP

IT WASN'T because of foreign lands
That I first went to sea;
But it was because the thought of ships
Would never let me be:
The dream of ships, the hope of ships
That thundered on and on,
Bringing their furrows across the night
And into the breaking dawn . . .
Though I was born an inland man,
When I was still a lad
I knew there was one thing awaiting me
That I had never had.
I caught a freight; it wasn't enough,
Though I liked its traveling far.
It wasn't until I climbed the shrouds,
Beneath a rocking star,
That I learned the reason I was born:
Which was—for going to sea!
I was born to work on sailing ships;
There was nothing else for me.
I fell in love; it wasn't enough!
I caught a rumbling freight;
It took me to where I found a ship—
My feet could hardly wait
Till I spoke the captain; then I knew
What I was born to be.
"Come aboard," says he. "Aye, aye!" says I
And so I shipped to sea!



Of SLANDER

By F. R. BUCKLEY

To his incomparable good Lordship, my singular sweet Lord Amilcar I; by God's kindness to the commonalty Duke of Rometia, Lord of Trastevere, Monterosso and Imagna; Tyrant of Bugasto and so following. From his Grace's obliged humble pensioner, L. Caradosso, these:

SIRE:

I have your Lordship's command and the wine that came with it; and return thanks for both, but more particularly for the former. To one who, like your Grace, knew something of my habits while I was yet a soldier, it may seem strange that I am more grateful for the order to tell a story of my past than for the means of forgetting my future; but indeed at seventy-eight years there is no forgetting this last, even with such a vintage as that of 1580. The end is too plain in sight. A man's only refuge is in the past—and the road thither is a lonely one to be taken alone; wherefore it is kinder to listen to an old man than to do aught else for him; and to persons able to profit by instruction, God rewards the deed accordingly.

Now, meseems (for the wine was notwithstanding very good, and my head aches somewhat this morning) that I was to tell how I was once slandered and profited thereby. Nay, more; how I was belied, misrepresented, traduced and libeled, and by a master of these arts, and came out of the affair with my fortune made—such fortune as ever I had.

And when I reflect that at the time I was no more than a lieutenant, a mere wet nosed boy of thirty, scarce two years older than your Grace's present guard captain, and accordingly quite incapable of managing mine own affairs, I see more clearly than ever that there is a Providence which watches over the honest and the virtuous.

Mine enemy was called Matteo Guadagni, and he hated me because of a woman. I forget her name; though the last time I passed through the Romagna her son sought me out—a fine lad with seventeen children of his own—and cracked six bottles with me in the most filial manner. Aye, aye. Of course, Matteo's resentment was utterly without base; learning of it at its beginning, I even went to him—a lieutenant to a comptroller's scrivener, mark you—and tried to smooth matters, quite in vain.

I asked him, as I ask your Lordship, whether it was my fault if women preferred a straight leg to knock knees,

broad shoulders to a back hunched from continual writing; and a moderate good face to something resembling rather a fish's belly? But he would not see reason. I can see him now, sitting at his desk in the rusty black gown he affected, chewing the feather off his pen and wondering whether he dared throw the inkpot at me.

He decided that he could do worse; which was better for him (I should certainly have cut his throat) and—as I have said—better by far for me, even at the moment. I had on a new doublet, given me that very morning by—no, the name escapes me; and while spilt blood has many virtues, it will not unstain ink.

I should have said that we were both in the service of the old man Niccolo da Monte Ruosi. I had entered his service, first because I must eat; and secondly because he was said to boast Malatesta lineage, which meant battle, murder and sudden death a-plenty.

Alas for me! What Malatesta there was in him had run to features. He looked most excellent villainous, something like a fish eagle with the mange; he would sit in his great hall shivering in August, and peering about him with a gaze that made me shiver too; but indeed he was no more than a stupid old dotard, waiting for dead men's shoes without any move to help empty them. He would have the guard paraded every day; he would hobble down the line pinching the men's muscles and chuckling as he ran his thumb over the edges of their swords; and then he would retire and pen moral ordinances and have the same posted in the guardroom! It was to express my surprise at one of them which forbade profane swearing, that I invented that oath for using which your Lordship's Grace was so whipped in his eighth year.

I knew well, after I had quarreled with the scrivener, that there would soon be another proclamation, forbidding commerce with God's female creation; to forestall the which and for another reason (I marvel at my boldness, fool though the old lord was) I craved audience of his Excellency, and prayed that at least he would not outlaw the drinking of wine. I represented, before he could stop me, that the captain of the guard was sick; that the whole responsibility of duty fell on me; and that while the men were docile enough at the present, I could not, single handed, control them if they were roaring drunk.

"Drunk?" says the old man, peering up from the regulation upon which (O instinct!) he had indeed been engaged. "How should they be drunk if—"

But the problem was too much for him; he had easier matter to hand.

"Thou art Luigi Caradosso," says he with much certainty. "Ha! It was in my mind to send for thee. How now, sirrah? What is this? What am I told of thee?"

"If your Lordship pleases," says I, saluting, "and according to the custom of courts, most probably lies."

"Art thou not a monger?" says he. "Doth not thy name stink with scandal? Fie on you! In my uniform!"

I have noticed it as a peculiarity of nobles that they expect their livery to confer on its bearer virtues in which the said nobles themselves are lacking; a strange conceit, which hath always given me the gripes. So I saluted again.

"This Caterina," says he. (I have forgotten the name, but it may well have been Caterina; or Maria, perchance.) "This Caterina, now. What hast thou to say of her?"

"May I rather ask your Lordship," says I, saluting for the third time, "what complaint the lady hath of me?"

He spat out pen feathers and peered.

"Do I know the wench?" he demanded.

"I had thought—" I began; but he knew at least one trick of good lordship—how to place underlings in the wrong by force of anger.

He now leaped to his feet and shook his bony old finger in my face, and demanded whether I had great taste for a dungeon and fifty lashes, that I dared bandy words with him. Aye, in defiance of his own orders, he called upon God to witness that I was an insolent beggar

born out of wedlock, whom he would hang for another word. So I saluted again, content to have gained my point.

"I'll take order with thee, fellow," he snarled, sitting down at his table and picking up the pen. "Tomorrow morning at dawn take fifty men and get you gone to Neroli. You go as funeral guard to the late lord my cousin, and as escort to my son, who will be there at your arrival. After his Lordship shall be underground, return to the castle and occupy it."

"In your Highness's name?"

"Did I say in my name?" roared old Niccolo. "No. Occupy it, I said; keep it for me. That is all."

"It was but in my mind," I said, saluting for the fifth time, "that perchance certain evil minded or covetous persons, unaware of your Lordship's rights, might endeavor—"

"Well, fool!"

"—to seize the castle."

"Well?"

"In dissuading them from such a course," says I, "it would be well to do so under some authority, in order to avoid the insinuation of rioting and murder. In your Lordship's name such diversions would become warfare, and acceptable to both God and man. Under favor."

I thought he would die of a fit.

"Rioting!" he croaked. "Murder! This to my face! Mark me, fellow; I am upsides with thee. Occupy the castle according to orders. But let me hear of one riot or one murder, and I hang thee. Now begone!"

A VERY pleasant mission being thus confirmed unto me, I gathered up my men and departed according to orders. Your Grace, as a statesman, will see the situation, and no doubt rejoice in the same; however, I was not rejoicing as we started through the lifting mists toward Neroli. Niccolo, of course, had but the shadow of a claim to this county; which claim he was by us asserting in a manner which—if there were opposition—he could disallow. His son and his troops were at Neroli as a funeral guard; a mark of respect; and I had no doubt but the son would leave the place as soon as the burial should be over.

If the guard, remaining, were confronted with the forces of a stronger claimant and fought, Niccolo would disown their act, and hang me. If on the other hand they retreated before newcomers, he would but lose what he had never had—and hang me as a consolation.

Nay, it did not take four hours of sitting outside a church in the pouring rain to depress my spirits that day; I was so miserable that not even my speech with Niccolo's son—he departed, in effect, that very evening—could make much difference to me. He was a lanky young man, of innocent veal-like countenance and that holy intonation youths learn from the priests in the schools. His name was Gianbattista.

"Caradosso," says he, having summoned me to the room where he was dressing, "thou hast instructions from my father?"

"Yes, my Lord."

"Look well to them," says he. "Occupy this castle in accord with duty; let it not on any account fall prey to marauding rogues. But remember that both my father and I do most formally forbid violence; first, because we are not strong enough to meet violence with violence, once it should be provoked; and secondly because it is a sin to take away life which, with all our science, we can not give."

I was not so sure of that last, and could have produced witnesses; but thought it better to say nothing and salute.

"You may go," says the young man, stretching out his hands as though to bless me; though really he was but reaching for his sleeves.

So we fifty sat down in Neroli, and ate very ill, and drank worse, and had nothing to do all day but bite our nails and curse and stare out through the windows of the guardroom at the flat, dismal landscape under the driving rain. There was no town of Neroli; no village, even; not a hamlet under the castle walls; nothing.

The men who were off guard, weary of inaction, began to quarrel and to fight among themselves; I kept them from the throats of the score of men who had been guard to his late Lordship and still remained; but the very keeping of them apart brought me into collision with the oaf who had been captain to these others.

He was a squat fellow with a swivel eye which, after he had called me a baboon, I found very deceptive. Thinking that he was looking at me with his left eye, I guarded low; whereas actually his right had been coveting my Adam's apple, and I was almost run through the throat. Recovering my poise and emerging from my false guard into a smart *rinverso tondo*, I thereafter immediately reduced the number of his eyes to one; after which he gave me much less trouble. We buried him just behind the kitchen garden, on the very morning that Matteo Guadagni came with our pay for the month we had been there; and of course fate must have it that the diggers should return at the very moment of his entrance, swinging their earthy spades and joking.

"What's this?" demands Matteo, turning paler even than was his wont.

"Pay day," says I.

"But—but—" he stuttered. "Some one hath died. Who and how? I demand to be told."

"And I demand that thou unlock thy money chest and do thy business and begone, spindle shanks, without further nosing into what is not thy business."

He eyed me like a vicious horse.

"Thou art not seemingly aware," he said slowly, "that his Lordship hath been pleased to appoint me paymaster *and* secretary of state. Therefore, when I demand—"

"To a secretary of state," says I, taking off my hat and bowing so violently as to knock him four or five paces backward, "I can deny nothing. The late lamented was, therefore, the captain of the late lord's late guard."

"And how—"

"He had the misfortune," says I, putting on my hat again and eyeing the wretched man, "to offend me."

Guadagni went all of a quiver.

"Is—is this a threat?" he chattered.

"If the cap fits," says I, "wear it."

And left him; out of which transactions—I mean my little argument with the captain aforesaid, and the mild polite conversation with himself—what a tale did that lying rascal carry back to old Niccolo! After all my efforts to obey orders and avoid violence; after—as I have shown—I had been so mealy mouthed with him that I blush to think of it even now; that rogue represented me to his Lordship as a ruffler and a swordsman, who had killed six men in duels and had come within an ace of murdering himself. When, as I have shown your Grace, all I had done was to indulge in a quite commonplace argument with a fellow soldier; and—in regard to the latter accusation—perhaps to play carelessly with my dagger when Matteo paid me a lead crown. Indeed, so did he slander me that Niccolo was writing to recall me for punishment, when apoplexy struck him and his son came to the throne.

A dubious benefit that seemed to be, however; I have drawn the young man's portrait. True, he did not proceed with my recall; but on Guadagni's evidence he sent me such a dispatch as made my hair rise on end. It was a dispatch such as could be answered only by a ride to Monte Ruosi, and the cutting off of Matteo Guadagni's ears—the which deed of simple justice the rogue would doubtless use as an opportunity to belie me still further. So I made no reply, beyond sending my most humble submission to his Lordship; and returned to duty with a heavier heart than before.

Now I put the case before your Excellency, and will abide by your Grace's judgment. My new young Lord Gianbattista had, as I say, been very stern on all ruffianism and life taking; saying, as he had said before, that no one had right to destroy what he could not create, and threatening to hang me if I disobeyed him. He further repeated that the county was in no strength to provoke

violence and adjured me once more to peaceful methods in the holding of the castle. And I was well disposed to obey; but what, even under such orders, is a man to do who wakes at midnight and finds his habitation full of armed men, of whom one is in the very act of cutting his throat?

Your Lordship is experienced, and moreover hath time to consider the matter. Having no leisure—the knife was actually touching my left ear—and being moreover a young man with the flightiness common to boys under fifty—I did the first thing that came into my mind and stabbed the murderer with his own dagger. He made some objection to this, wrestling with me so that chairs and beds and tables and the like were overthrown, and meantime howled dismally for aid. But I did it nevertheless, seized my sword and, without troubling to dress, ran out into the courtyard.

And now I put another question to your Grace. The yard was full of men—the old lord's guard and others in the pay of Bernardo Strozzi; which latter having decided to capture the castle for benefit of the said Bernardo, had by traitorous conspiracy with the former come in by a sally port and locked all the men save the wall guards into their quarters. Since, being armed with arquebuses and those devil's engines known as pistolets, they were furthermore endeavoring to pick the wall guards off like pigeons, what was I to do? I addressed myself in all loving-kindness to the nearest invader—it chanced to be Bernardo himself—and presented him with six or eight inches of steel.

Of course there was a fight; and naturally a little blood was spilt; but no battle and massacre such as was alleged later by that cursed Matteo Guadagni; and in any event, I submit that in battle as in everything else, it is the intention that should be considered. I was at this time, as your Grace knoweth I have ever been, a peaceful man, preferring uninterrupted sleep to warfare of any kind whatsoever. Such actions as I took on that much belied night were prompted by the natural human desire to preserve my life both from bullets and from the quartan ague which, had I not indulged in exercise, must have been my fate, shirt clad and barefoot as I was in that cold weather.

As for the extent of the exercise, or the manner of it, these matters were not in my choice, but rather in that of mine enemies, who now crowded about me howling as though I had done them some injury, whereas the glove was entirely on the other hand. First and foremost, there was a long, leering fellow with a pike—as nasty, slippery a fighter as ever I remember; much addicted to mowing at a man's knees and such dirtinesses. I sent a shrewd cut at his head; he fell with the very motion of one cloven to the ear-drums; and yet, at the hottest moment of my disputation with four other swordsmen, what should I discover but that this first rogue was not dead at all—lying on the flagstones he was, and clawing at my ham-strings with the hook of his partisan.

Even so, it was as well he attracted my attention; for now that I had dispatched two of the four that had come at me in front, behold two more, or it may have been three, rushing on me from the rear; of whom one approached me with a great bound, spitting himself very neatly on my blade. He took it between the rib bones and wrenched it out of my hand; which forced me to stoop for the fallen pikeman's instrument, thus missing some five or six thrusts that had been directed at my lungs and such-like. Can I be blamed for following the tactics that had been used against me and, still stooped, mowing at the encircling forest of legs? And am I to blame if the halberd was excessive sharp? It was a noble weapon; swung in circles, it produced a truly magnificent effect, especially as the light was bad.

Even after the loss of the two or three legs severed at my first essay had apprised mine enemies what was toward, there were those who stood still before my advance, thinking that they should see the head of my weapon as it came their way. Which, since the blade was of blue

Milan steel, was a delusion and a snare to them; I can see now the expression on the face of one crouching swordsman as his head rose suddenly from its previous position on the neck.

ACCORDING to that liar Matteo, I moved aimlessly about the courtyard, seeking groups at which to swing my ax. Is it likely? My only motion was in a straight line, from the place at which I had met these rough fellows, to the door which penned my poor boys of the guard in their stuffy vault; which journey I had to make backward, because my persecutors followed me. Did not one of them take off my left ear lobe with a pistolet ball? Did not another, run decently through the belly with my partisan, throw his sword in my face as an urchin might throw a brickbat? There was no more shame, no more decency in them than in so many wild animals; and if he who had locked my men into their quarters had not left the key in the lock, most assuredly I should have been a dead man within five minutes.

A halberd, though an excellent weapon for broad effects, lacks the delicacy of the sword; and, when swung for ten or fifteen minutes without cease, inclines to weary the shoulders. I had in fact missed two blows of the easiest, and taken half a dagger through the left thigh, when my hand found the key to the guardroom door; and when my men issued forth, I was spent past the leading of them. There was, to be frank, a jug of wine on the guardroom table, whereof I felt urgent need; and after that I may have fainted, or possibly gone to sleep for a few moments. Be it remembered that I had been rudely awaked.

This is the time during which (according to Matteo) my men, having defeated the marauders in plain fight, chased them like conies up stairways, into corridors, and over battlements; flinging them into the moat or otherwise murdering them when caught. I know nothing save what my sergeant told me when I awoke; I expressed to him the hope that there had been no violation of my Lord Gianbattista his orders and he said that no, the invaders had found themselves outmanned and had gone to other places; what place exactly he did not know, though he was of an opinion.

A most frank and open statement, entirely worthy of belief. Whereas on the other hand, if every man-jack of the attackers was slain, who bore the tale to Matteo?

Yet that herring stomach claimed that such was the case; and moreover he placed the blame not upon my men, nor upon me as their commander; but upon my bodily self! I had the tale from Caterina (or Francesca perhaps her name was) who had it from her gossip, whose aunt's son was an ink boy to the council of nobles where the affair was discussed.

Proud of his new secretary's robe with fur on it, and boiling with hatred, the wretched Guadagni spoke to this body for half an hour, and all against me. I had, it seemed, come forth upon my victims like a wild man, and slain fourteen or fifteen of them at the first encounter. Then I had taken an ax in each hand and fallen on the remainder. After I had released my men by tearing down the guardroom doors with my bare hands, I had desired my men to stand by and watch while I sported with the few strangers that were left; after slaying most of whom single-handed, and disarming the residue, I turned them over to my soldiers as Nero used to give Christians to wild beasts.

As mad a farrago as could be imagined; which yet did not fail of its effect. The little ink boy, when later I essayed with sweetmeats to draw forth the full story, fled screaming from the room and was found two days thence hiding in a barrel. As for the assembled lords, lacking as they usually do even an ink boy's knowledge of life, they sat appalled and entirely credulous.

"What I most regret," says my lord Gianbattista, "is the death of his good Lordship, my lord Bernardo. As your Graces know, I am a man of peace, op-

posed to the shedding of even the most vulgar blood; for as I sometimes say, who can restore even that common fluid to veins whence it has been released? And how much more impossible it is to replace that divine extract which animated our late friend and brother. Alas!"

He was, I should have said, somewhat afflicted with pimples. They were as good as seals on his sincerity.

"This raving homicide Caradosso, moreover," says he sadly, "still remains with his band in possession of Neroli. My captain hath been ill, and I have been too sad to take measures against the lieutenant as yet. Furthermore, it has struck me that some other lord may have a claim to this territory, superior to mine own. If so, I turn over to him, freely and fully, the right to take and punish this Caradosso as he may desire."

This was mighty generous of him (of course my mistress sent me news of the offer as soon as might be) but the lords did not accept. There were some (according to the ink boy) who had spoken loudly of their claims in the anteroom, and there had even been hints to my lord's face; but now no one said anything.

"It is not well that lands should be left lordless," says Gianbattista. "I blame myself, though indeed my desire was but to avoid presumption, for not having assumed this lordship before. If none other claims it, I will perform the duty of assumption forthwith. Will your Lordships here and now admit my title?"

Since there was nothing else for them to do, they did this; whereupon Gianbattista arose, as one weary and heavy at heart.

"With permission," he said, "I will retire. This very night I plan to send my captain, with the remainder of my guard, to seize this Caradosso and bring him before me for trial. Have I the council's leave to go on this affair of justice?"

They gave it; and, according to the ink boy, there were certain former claimants in the council who desired that Beelzebub go with him; a wish later held to have been fulfilled. However, I knew nothing of this; I merely recount that as soon as this news reached me—the same night—of course I left Neroli and my command; and, directly by fault of that cursed penman Matteo, found myself homeless, exiled and in peril of my neck, in a countryside consisting almost entirely of mud.

I had not, moreover, gone more than five miles through the pitch dark before my horse put his foot in a rabbit hole, breaking his leg and giving me such a shaking as, with my wounds, made me lie up for two days in a cave overlooking the main road. It was on the second day—*not* on the next morning after the council, as Gianbattista had promised—that I saw the captain's column on its way to Neroli; two hundred men—which meant that levies had been raised; and lo and behold, no less than four new falconets made of brass. My heart sank.

Had I been at the castle and disposed to use my detachment for resistance, two hundred men—considering that they were commanded by that fool of a captain—might not have been too many for my arrest; but the four falconets struck me as an exaggeration. Based (methought) on the exaggerations of Guadagni. I knew he had belied me; but now I was of opinion that he must have convinced my lord that I was the devil in person.

Wherein I was right; though for the wrong reason.

However, even devils must eat; aye, and from the place of their habitation, they have a preference for sleeping as warm as may be. So, not in boldness or audacity, but in desperation, I bought a peasant's clothes off his back, stuck my sword down my hose leg, promised to return and stick it through the peasant if he blabbed, and limped into Monte Ruosi to see Felicia. Or Caterina or Maria—I mean the girl whose disdain had so soured Guadagni.

Whatever her name, she was a comfortable body of notable ability at wine mulling; also possessor of a house of her own, wherein, unfortunately for me, she kept lodgers. It was therefore necessary

that, after she had equipped me with clothes and a cloak, I should take up my abode with a cousin of hers who lived two miles down the road to Verona; and she visited me there, bringing herbs and the like necessary for the treatment of my hurts. Thanks to her skill at nursing (she was a woman of most contradictory gifts) I was capable by the third day; notwithstanding which improvement, I hesitated to go outdoors.

"Why not, 'a God's name?" she asked, desiring to show me to a friend of hers. "None know thee here, except the palace folk, and they come not into the town."

"The guard know me," says I.

"But the guard is at Neroli."

"On a vain errand, as thou knowest. It will return today or tomorrow, and then—"

She laughed.

"No. Not today. Nor tomorrow. Nor until his Lordship is quite sure that Neroli is his. Didst think he sent artillery for thy benefit alone, O vanity?"

"It would not be far fetched, after what he hath heard from that Guadagni," says I; which she agreed, with some pride in my ill reputation, was the case.

"Thou art become a legend in the town," says she. "Thy name frightens babes, and since thine escape they say his Lordship hath doubled the sentries and taken to a coat of mail."

I groaned aloud. None is so deadly as a frightened man, especially to the one he fears. Likewise I made some remarks upon Matteo Guadagni.

"He hath indeed done thee ill," says Caterina, considering with a finger at her chin. "Losing thee thy lieutenancy and all. Stay. I have a brother whose wife's brother is a *bravo*. His price is twelve crowns, but for one of the family he would take eight. Shall he kill the old rogue?"

Not having the eight crowns, I condemned such a sinful suggestion, adding that I was capable, myself, of entering the castle and dealing with Matteo if need were; doubled sentries or tripled notwithstanding.

"Ah," says Caterina, "and yet 'tis thou that art afraid to step into the town for supper at my house this night. And all the lodgers away at the fair!"

SO THAT of course I went, and an excellent supper it proved to be. I had just taken off my shoon, stretched out my feet in front of the fire and opened a fourth bottle of Greek wine, when the front door of the house thundered with a tremendous knocking.

"Who's there?" demanded Caterina.

"The watch!"

"The back door," says I, reaching for my shoes again; but she laid hand on my arm.

"If 'tis the watch, the house is surrounded, and the rear guard will fire on thee," she whispered. "But I think it is not. We have had no watch since the guard went to Neroli. It is that nobleman, or I mistake."

She had told me somewhat, already, of this fellow; a blusterous hill squire who while visiting my lord had chanced to lay eyes on her, and desired to lay hands. If this were he, his intention was clear; and what, I demand of your Grace, was I to do? Flee and leave Caterina to be carried off? Indeed I was, thanks to my wounds and recent privations, in no state of lust for battle; but meseemed it was the least due to common manhood that I should take sword in hand and myself open the door.

It was the squire aforesaid; and there were seven men with him.

"I—" he began, too busy putting his foot in the door to see who fronted him, which when he noted (one of his supporters having howled, "She hath a husband!") what did he do but go groping at his waist for a pistolet!

Not only this, but his seven men drew their cutlery and crowded forward; whereat, according merely to the dictates of common sense, and with no rage or ill-feeling whatsoever, I advanced among them—merely to anticipate their attack. To stand there like a block and give them

time to arm themselves—that would have been to invite murder and provoke riot; not a soldier in the world but will agree upon this. I went forward, then, simply with the purpose of *avoiding* violence; which advance was later represented by Matteo as a furious attack definitely proving me to be a man of the most murderous propensities. He said moreover that all seven of the men were *bravi;* whereas at least two of them were servants of the squire's own train—bumpkins from Valdosta, too ignorant even to know when they were outmatched.

Having dealt with them, to be sure I came to three others who seemed to know their hilts from their points; but they attacked in no sort of order, and moreover their leader, aiming his pistolet at me, was so kind as to shoot one of them through the head. And since the three were shoulder to shoulder, huddled together as though for warmth, of course the dead man, falling, made his companions to stagger; a most fatal procedure.

Which left me, as your Grace may easily compute, but two more swordsmen and the squire; of whom one—I could not see which, being woundily occupied—after some few passes turned tail and ran, howling dismally; I suppose it was the noble, since he was found half a mile away. But how should I know? Why should I believe this, rather than any other of Matteo Guadagni's reports? In any event, it was a lie to say that I followed the man roaring like a bull and demanding his liver. I was too busy with the men he had left behind; and how he should have come by the number of stab wounds alleged I have no idea. Five or six—seeing that it was a hottish fight while it lasted—one might believe; but seventeen—O Ananias!

The man I did pursue was a harmless fellow, who chanced to choose the road I must take to return to the cousin's house. I desired nothing more than that he should escape me and leave my way clear; but, rounding a corner, he turned at bay, and but for God's mercy would have run me through the body. And what says the verse, very little altered from the Scriptures? "Christian, unto others do as they have tried to do to you." So I did it, and passed on, arriving more dead than alive at the house on which I counted for shelter.

Mark again the effects of that scrivener's malice. The cousin had heard the stories; wherefore, instead of seeing in me a poor wounded man, more worthy—by three cuts—of his charity than before, he beheld on his doorstep a gory wretch of terrible aspect; to whom, had I not smashed in a window and made way to my bedroom at dagger's point, he would have denied shelter.

Waking after dreams that I had been seized, bound and carried whither I had no desire to go, I found myself indeed standing between two soldiers (ten more being in ranks on either hand) in the presence of my Lord Gianbattista and that jackal Matteo, in the Castle of Monte Ruosi. By the light that entered the room, I judged the hour to be a little after dawn; and took it that I should probably be hanged forthwith, the hour being so suitable.

But Matteo had mountains still to pile on the mountains of his former lies.

"My Lord," says he, letting water trickle from his mouth corners in the way Caterina had so particularly disliked, "I have further to report that in addition to entering this citizen's house by violence, and so terrifying the occupants that at first they denied his presence, this madman, being seized, fought desperately with no less than four soldiers, of whom two were armed with arquebuses. Guido Villani, the corporal, hath a broken nose; another man, three ribs crushed; whereas for the third soldier this homicide tore an ankle half out its socket, so that the victim can not walk. But for accident, which caused him to stumble and fall down a flight of stairs so that the fourth soldier seized him unconscious, he would have wounded the whole of the detachment, and escaped

your Lordship's justice again."

"It is rarely," says Gianbattista, looking at Matteo in a way I did not then comprehend, "that any escapes my justice even the first time, Ser Matteo. What has the prisoner to say?"

Could I have spoken with the guardsmen, as I did later, I could have told a pretty tale, but how was I to declare it? Did I plead unconsciousness, my drunken weight being too much for them, and indeed rolling them incontinent downstairs, Matteo would accuse delirium, and leave me no denial.

And, besides, his former accusations were enow without this. I was a dead man, methought, and my best course was to behave with a dignity becoming. So having called Matteo a liar and spat in his face, I folded my arms and stood silent.

"You may go," says my lord to Matteo.

He wished to stay and rejoice in my downfall—aye, even to the extent of protesting my lord's order; who suddenly arose and so addressed him that the rogue went scuttling from the room like a woodlouse from a log.

"Bring the prisoner," says Gianbattista to the guard sergeant. "Follow me."

An extraordinary proceeding, to be followed by a still more extraordinary. For, having preceded us to a retired room of his own apartments, my lord dismissed the guard and, seating himself, invited me to do likewise! To sit in his presence! I stared at him open-mouthed; while the sergeant—a bloodless looking youth who evidently feared me—thought his Excellency must have gone suddenly mad.

"But, my Lord—" he began; whereupon Gianbattista, to my utter amazement, threw an inkwell at him.

Not only so, but he swore—good, round, supple bodied oaths with a tang to them—he, the pimply pietist of Neroli!

Small wonder then that after the man had gone I sat gawping at his Lordship in defiance of good manners; which however he did not rebuke, seeming to be engaged on a particular study of myself.

HE CHUCKLED suddenly.

"I should not have believed it," says he. "Shouldst have been an actor, Luigi."

"My Lord—"

He waved his hand at me.

"Very well, very well," he said, smiling. "In a minute, in a minute. It is no disgrace to have deceived me, Caradosso; pride yourself rather—it is a feat not often accomplished. And I confess that I thought thee a poor spirited man. Ha-ha!"

I had little enough blood left in me, God wot; but what I had went hereupon to my cheeks.

"Sire," I said, "I trust I am no more poor spirited than the next man."

He roared.

"Nay. *Trust* is good. Ho-ho!"

"But your Lordship will remember that I was under orders—"

He patted the table soothingly.

"Come, come," he said. "I reproach thee not, good Luigi. I marvel at thee. I have known cowards who could pass for brave men on first acquaintance; but never even a moderately brave man who dared play the part of a milksop, no matter how great the necessity. Much less a roarer of thy kidney."

My heart sank. He had believed all those lies of Matteo's; this good humor of his was a sarcastical playing with me before ordering in the hangman. Rising, as though to give more force to my protestation, I resolved to avenge this torture by springing across the table and doing my best to strangle him. I did not know, until he pulled it forth and pointed it at me, that he had one of those nasty pistolets in the table drawer.

"I was but about to tell your Excellency," says I, somewhat abashed, "that I have been belied."

"Ha-ha!"

"By an enemy," says I, wishing that he would keep his finger away from the trigger, "with reasons for desiring my ruin."

"Ha-ha! Proceed."

Which I did, somewhat brokenly be-

cause of my nervousness of the pistolet—it was one of the new wheel-lock things that go off at a touch; and also because of my lord's unceasing merriment. The more I protested that I was no wild man but a poor soldier, taking less joy in battle than most, the more he laughed. My conclusion, which was a plea for credence on behalf of my poor old mother—she had been dead twenty years, but how should he know that?—found him almost in tears with mirth.

"So thou'rt a little woolly lamb, eh?" he choked out. "And wast about to prove it by strangling thy liege lord?"

"Sire," says I, woundily moved to make the attempt after all.

"Enough! Be silent," says he, with sudden impatience. "Sit. Thou hast woefully misunderstood me, Luigi. I am not my father, to persist in a policy from habit, when circumstances change. Thou art a ruffler, a cruiser against the peace and a common roarer; it is established by evidence and it is as well for thee."

He saw my mouth—opened to say that the evidence was false—close again at his last words; and he smiled. Likewise he leaned forward across the table.

"I will be frank; but for thee, God's unexpected gift in the form of a devil unchained," he said, "I should be awkwardly placed. Having gained Neroli by negotiation—in which thou, by thine exceeding ruffianism, unwittingly helped—I now need Rastelli to make the triangle of forts. Not until I have it, as thou seest, shall I be safe in the two properties already mine."

This was true; though how the devil he should know so much of stategy was beyond me. Evidently I had overestimated his pimples.

"I have been raising levies," he went on, rubbing his chin reflectively. "Needed my full force of veterans for Neroli—now thou'rt out of the way, some of those rascal nobles might change their minds—and I have enlisted fifty toward a second company. All raw yet, as thou hast seen. That sergeant, for instance. Well. Now comes a demand from the council of nobles that I disband this new enlistment within four days; whereof one hath elapsed. There remain three."

I agreed with this arithmetic.

"Well?" says my lord.

I counted hastily on my fingers, but could find no error in the calculation; so sat and stared at him.

"No idea? But great brains and great valor are not husband and wife. Evidently, I wish thee, before the three days shall have passed, to capture the fort of Rastelli."

"Capture it?" I gasped.

"Certainly."

"With fifty men?"

He yawned.

"I can not pretend," says he, "that the fifty will be of much use to thee, Caradosso; they are very raw; and if they were trained, there are men enow in Rastelli to eat them alive. It is on thee that I rely, though the fifty are of course at thy disposal."

"But, my Lord—"

"It is impossible? So was thy naked fighting of two score men at Neroli; so was thy slaying of yon squire and his seven *bravi*. Thou art—and on the testimony of thine enemies, Luigi *mio*—that rare thing, a doer of the impossibilities of combat. Why else have I not hanged thee?"

He got up, shook loose his sleeves and smiled encouragingly upon me.

"Go, therefore," he said, "and consider thy method of attack. It would be well to start early tomorrow. The time is short."

WHICH I did, after a night of the most dismal brainracking, and yet another interview with my lord. For I discovered—starting forth with my head and all my wounds aching damnably—that he had told off a man to accompany me; a wet nosed youth of the new guard levy whose presence would have made my plan, already dependent for success on five consecutive miracles, hopeless of execution by either God or man. Which being

explained to him, Gianbattista agreed to withdraw the spy, if so be I would swear (he had the Evangelists ready, bound in blue leather) not to profit by my opportunity to escape.

"And if I might beseech your Lordship," says I weakly, after doing this.

"Yes?"

"If the task proves in effect impossible, and I yet escape with my life, may I expect a pardon for the offenses alleged, of which I am not guilty?"

He eyed me regretfully and stroked his chin.

"It grieves me to the soul, my Caradosso," says he, "but thou must see my position. If I hold the triangle of forts, whereof Rastelli is the third, I can defy the world, and shall do so gladly; but if not, sure thou must see that I am too insecure in my present holdings to dare offend the council of nobles—to whom of necessity I promised thy—"

He coughed. We looked at each other. And, to make a long story short, by noon that day I was before the castle gate of Rastelli disguised as an old man, with genuine wounds, and a stiff leg due to my having a sword down my hose; endeavoring to peddle spice cakes (Caterina made them) to the guard.

Nay, your Grace wrongs me; the cakes were not poisoned; these were the good old days, when men still had scruples. This was my plan, the thought whereof still makes chills to run up and down my backbone. As a tart seller and as an old soldier with some skill at yarn spinning, I might (by a miracle) be admitted to the castle, to vend cakes to the sentries on the wall. Having thus gained admission, it would be possible for me (granting a second intervention of providence) to secrete myself in some cubbyhole until night— I had set aside forty-eight hours for all this ingratiation and so on; my fifty raw men were to be within hail after dark, the night second following my arrival.

Well, emerging from my hiding place (with a third miracle to back me) I hoped to spill water into the touchholes of all such guns as might be turned toward the courtyard; and then descending, somehow to deal with the gate guard, as to get the bolts drawn. This part of the scheme was of necessity vague—God have mercy, what was the rest of it?—because I did not know the habits of the guard, nor whether there might not be some secluded postern left without a sentry. Well (a fourth aid from on high having got my farmers into the castle) I counted on a fifth and last miracle to let their moppings and mowings prevail against the efforts of the hundred-odd men of the defense.

Your Grace will not wonder that, despite desperate efforts to believe Matteo Guadagni's lies about myself, and vain self-repetition that the guard would be surprised, that my own men would be dangerous mad with fear, and so following—I arrived at Rastelli in a cold sweat, identical with that which bedews the foreheads of the dying.

Judge to what extent this was augmented when, as I sat under the portcullis (for the sentries would by no means let me in) I found myself suddenly confronted by an officer; he stared keenly into my face for some seconds (I had false whiskers, to be sure, but what is horsehair?) and commanded me to follow him. Assisting me to rise, and walking beside me with the eye of a hawk on my sword leg, he conducted me to a little dungeon, locked the door and stood grinning at me in the light from a barred window. He was a middle aged man, short, stocky, with a scraggly beard and most resolute piercing gray eyes.

"So!" says he. "Captain Luigi Caradosso."

"NAY, your Honor," says I.

"Hast been demoted?" he inquired sympathetically. "Ah, it happens. Wast a captain last time I saw thee—and a good one. At the Ford of Agagli."

Ah, if he had been there, beyond question he knew me; I had been conspicuous enough. And what use to deny, when

the stretching forth of his hand would bare my whole countenance to him? The whiskers being moreover affixed with glue, I did not desire them roughly dealt with; wherefore I dropped my tray of cakes, folded my arms and asked him what then.

He hesitated.

"I had thought," says he dubiously, "that thou wert still—in short, and despite thy being on such a mission—that thou wert still of rank sufficient—"

"I am a lieutenant," I said, being physically weak and accordingly childish in the spirit.

"To the Lord Gianbattista of Monte Ruosi, no?"

I made no reply to this.

"At all events, thou'rt in charge of the attempt against this castle?"

I was obliged to seat myself on the earth floor. Wet though it was, sitting was better than falling.

"What need for questions?" says I, faintly. "Hang away. Certes I was not born for drowning."

He squatted by my side.

"Come, come, Lieutenant," he said in a low voice, very urgent, "thou art in the wrong of it. There's to be no hanging here. Listen! Art thou conscious?"

Shaking me by the arm, he muttered curses against who had sent me forth, after what I had done already, and the wounds I had gained doing it. Matteo's lies had traveled even hither, meseemed.

"I can hear."

"Then mark me. My name is Matteo Scarlatti. Thou hast heard of me."

I had not; but even *in profundis* there is such a thing as politeness; so that I opened my eyes and said aye—aye, indeed.

"And wilt hear more," says he; "for mark, I am none of your house soldiers. At the Ford of Agagli, my company was to be sure merged with others, but it was *my* company and still is so. I am a *condottiere*, seest thou, captain, and within a few years—"

He paused.

"Thou dost not ask why, then, am I captaining the guard for this rat of a Rastelli," he said, something offended, "but I will tell thee. There was no work to be done elsewhere, and in an evil day I hired out as castle guard. To make expenses, seest thou, and perhaps lay a little aside against the day— Conceive to thyself that we have been here four months, and for two of them have seen not a soldo of money! Promises, promises, promises; the feed for the horses and the men's rations both cut down; the wine watered—"

Now I opened my eyes upon him. A guardsman who hath had his wine diluted is always worth hearing.

"I was on the point," he said, "of sending to thy lord. By what I hear, he is a coming man; at any event, no such fellow as would try to rob a poor man of his money. Thy coming hath saved me the journey."

Still on his hams, he wriggled closer to me.

"Would thy lord," he whispered, tickling my ear abominably with his whiskers, "consider paying us our two months, and perhaps a thousand crowns over for the love of God? Look you, Luigi, I have four wives, all poor women with children; and I should be willing to stay a sennight, or even ten days, in case some one should try reprisal. Not that any one will; this mewler hath no friends, and with his triangle of forts, your lord will be invincible hereabouts. Hey? How thinkest thou?"

Of a verity, I was not thinking at all. I was dazed; stunned. The pain of my wounds seemed to have soothed itself gradually into a delicious languor, wherein the voices of seraphs sang enchantingly. But did I hear aright? Had the lyings of Matteo Guadagni, first designed to leave me spinning on the end of a rope, and later destined, on their rebound, to get me butchered without remedy at Rastelli, brought me indeed to this apotheosis whereby I should return to my lord bringing his fortress in my pocket gratis? There was indeed to be considered the two months' pay for Scarlatti's hundred men;

but that was less than the cost of the armor which would have been hacked off my fifty in any fight.

"Well, speak," says the *condottiere.* "Yes, or no? If no, I warn thee that thou'lt be stabbed on the instant. I can propose the same to other lords, and dead men tell no tales."

I began to laugh; whereat he clapped his hand over my mouth and swore horribly.

"Nay, stab me not," says I, when he released me. "I have been overstabbed of late. Kiss me, rather. Or, at all events, help me to my feet."

"It is yes, then?"

"A thousand times, fool! And may thou live a thousand years!"

"If I can live," says Scarlatti somberly, "until I have taught these nobles that contracts are made to be kept, I shall be satisfied—and of a ripe old age. This should be of help. A noble robbed of his castle by a common soldier, eh? Eh?"

"Indeed," says I.

"With the thousand crowns over," he said to himself, "I can buy a brass gun. That should be good for business. Eh?"

"Indeed, yes," I told him, agog to be gone.

"And look ye. If this Gianbattista of thine is not duly grateful to thee—for we'll have it seem thou seduced me into this, eh?"

I took his hand.

"We could likely turn *him* forth, give the castle to another, and thou couldst be my lieutenant. Eh? That was a pretty business at Agagli."

"Very like," says I, marveling at the man's effrontery. "Very like. Let us see. When shall we take occupation?"

"Could your lord be here at dark tomorrow?" he said, after a moment's thought. "There will be some excitement, perhaps, and I do not like my men to be disturbed at supper. Toward two hours of the second watch?"

"Excellently," says I.

"Then we will emerge discreetly from hence," says he, as though we had been discussing the price of a—of a plate of tarts, "and the matter is arranged."

As it was. Perfectly. Without a hitch—even in Scarlatti's story of how I had lured him into treachery by arguments beyond comprehension, and the threat of my extraordinary valor in the field. Whereby I gained much honor; indeed, it was not two hours after he had installed himself in the seat of the late lord of Rastelli (who had known no better than to try to stab me) that Gianbattista appointed me not only captain, but captain-general of all three forts, with pay according.

"In the trust," says he, looking at me hard, "that thou wilt serve me well and to the utmost of thine ability."

I saluted.

"Wounds," says he, eyeing my bandages, "or no wounds."

I saluted again.

"In high capacity or low."

"Indeed, yes, my Lord."

He fumbled in his bosom and produced a paper. Having read this over, he took pen and wrote at the bottom of it what seemed to be his signature—as lord, I found later, of all three counties.

"We will test thy disposition," he said. "Thou hast done well, and art in need of rest. Nevertheless, I have found that a certain man in my household hath been robbing me—and had robbed my father this long time past."

He tossed the signed document across the table to me.

"His name," says he, "is Matteo Guadagni, and he is to be found somewhere about the palace. Be so good as to take him to the battlements and hang him forthwith."

A sad first engagement in my new place, but what could I do?

I saluted, bowed and left the room about my duty.

Even as at these presents, having told a tale that hath tied my right hand into knots (and there is no more wine of your Grace's so liberal benefaction) I salute, kiss your Lordship's hands, and subscribe myself humbly ever the servant of your Excellency, —L. CARADOSSO

Concluding

SCALAWAG

By GORDON YOUNG

The Story Thus Far:

CAPTAIN Bill Jones was an easy-going man, slow to anger but devastating in his wrath. So when weeks passed and the storekeepers and planters of Tehuala Island still refused to pay various moneys owed him, he went ashore from his *Merry Maid* schooner bent on vengeance and pleasure.

The first to feel his sledge-like fist was the rascally Chinese merchant, Woo Lung. In addition collecting his debt, Bill had another score to settle with the Chinaman. His pretty daughter, Lalee, who loved one of Bill's sailors, was to be sold to a drunken planter. So Bill, after exacting his payment, ordered Woo Lung to have the girl ready to be brought off to his ship for marriage that night to her sailor lover.

Next he descended on Cloverland's fashionable hotel, where he knew he would find several of the tricky planters. Cloverland questioned his right to appear among the diners, so Bill beat him up, borrowed Mr. Cloverland's evening clothes, and dined at his ease.

On the way to the gambling room where he knew the planters would be playing, Bill was stopped by a pretty girl named Jeanne Malloy. She told him that her uncle was forcing her to marry one Mr. Pleu, a wealthy rake well known and disliked by Bill. So Captain Bill agreed to give her passage to Nello Island, where Jeanne said she had relatives.

Bill then went on to confront the planters. Jeanne's uncle and the amorous Mr. Pleu were among them. And Bill had little difficulty in provoking the sort of argument he craved. Swinging his broad fists with practised expertness, he soon converted the gambling room into a shambles. When the island constabulary arrived, Bill dived through a window, met Jeanne in the driveway below, and made off to the *Merry Maid*, bearing the honors of the day.

The next morning, with the schooner well out to sea, Bill prepared to marry Lalee to the sailor, Charlie; but was flabbergasted when the couple appeared in tow of a spinster missionary named Miss McKenzie. The infuriated lady described how Bill's black seamen had kidnaped her as well as Lalee, whom she had been visiting, the night before. Bill refused to put back to the island, and Miss McKenzie called down the Scriptures on his head.

Nello was in hostile native waters, but when it was finally sighted, Bill thought his troubles were over. But he found them just beginning. The *Merry Maid* had no sooner dropped her hook than a horde of cannibals attacked. After a bloody battle the schooner succeeded in beating them off, only to be left in a sinking condition, with half her company dead.

Ashore, Bill found Jeanne's relatives, the Stantons, mysteriously disappeared; and in their place four suspicious white men. Bill suspected foul play; and decided to trick the villainous looking strangers into showing their hand. Bill pretended to become muddled with whisky—waiting for the first false move toward the women.

"Call me drunk!" he muttered. "I ain't. I'm just tired; at's all. Tire'."

His head fell forward drowsily and he rubbed at his face, but he looked between his fingers at the sinister man named Coleman whose hand again and again went toward his hip. Coleman's dark eyes glanced now at Jeanne and now at Lalee who, motionless as a statue, crouched on

a pile of mats. Captain Bill was troubled by fears that the four strangers had murdered the Stanton family; but belief was not proof. He said to himself:

"As long as they think I'm drunk, they'll think anything goes, figgerin' to get rid of me without no trouble when the time comes!"

SO HE tipped up the bottle and drank again; and there was no pretense about it. He could hold a lot of whisky; and, cautiously, he had not taken very much.

"Oh, don't drink any more, Captain Bill!" Jeanne exclaimed, protesting, putting out her arm in an impotent gesture of restraint.

"Don'tchu worr', lil girl. I'll take care o' you," said Bill, nodding tipsily.

Jeanne realized that he was mimicking the burly Hall. She shuddered, thinking of the man. Yet, as miserable as she was, she would have been a little pleased that Captain Bill was jealous except for the fact that she believed him drunk.

Thompson appeared and said—

"If you folks want to eat come around to the table."

"Oh, I couldn't eat," Jeanne protested.

Bill arose groggily, swayed, staggered, fell up against the wall and reeled uncertainly. Coleman, leaning back against the veranda post, said nothing; but Thompson urged her to come. So, feeling that she would rather be where Miss McKenzie was than remain here, Jeanne spoke to Lalee. Then Captain Bill staggered along after them. If Jeanne had refused to go, he would have slumped down and said that he didn't want to eat.

Coleman arose and followed them leisurely, lingering well outside of the glow of the lantern that Thompson had picked up.

These men, whoever they were, had piled whatever they had or could find on the table. They did it wastefully, perhaps feeling that so much hospitality would make their guests think they were fine and trustworthy fellows. Most of the food came out of tins, but there was baked bread. And when Captain Bill, who sat near the end of the table with his back to the wall, tasted this bread his appetite left him and he felt his throat grow tight.

It was of corn meal, spiced with cracklings, flavored with shredded coconut; and nobody but Stanton's young daughter ever made it in just this way; and she always hastened to make a panful of it when Captain Bill came. He would insist that was why he had come —to get some of that bread. He now felt as though he were eating out of her dead hands. It had evidently been baked that morning.

"I thought you was hungry," said Hall as Captain Bill leaned on the table with cheek to palm.

Captain Bill grunted drunkenly.

"Come on, wake up. Here, drink some coffee," Thompson insisted.

"He can't carry liquor," Hall commented with a look toward Miss McKenzie and Jeanne, and stretched his bulky shoulders, silently implying that he himself could drink a quart or two and never bat an eye. "We must get him sobered up, too. Them cannibals are goin' to make an attack tonight. You'll see. They'll try to sneak up on us in the dark. They allus do that."

Bill grunted and put the coffee aside, splattering it over the tin cup. He seemed about to fall asleep.

Thompson stood up and came around beside him, urging him to eat, to drink the coffee, to wake up.

"Disgustin'!" said Hall, looking toward Miss McKenzie for confirmation.

There were two lanterns on the table. She peered through the light of the one in front of her, sternly and doubtfully watching Captain Bill. Jeanne too looked at him, sad eyed.

"Sam an' his boys out there," said Hall, gesturing with a sweep of his arm, "are strung out, keepin' watch. Get 'im woke up, Tom. We may need 'im to beat off them savages."

Bill, grumbling groggily that he was all right, was persuaded to drink some coffee.

Coleman, who had been eating mechanically, with his black eyes shifting about, said he would have a look around, and took up a lantern.

The women remained at the table, just sitting, wondering fearfully what would happen. One place seemed as good as another to wait for they knew not what; and sleeping, or trying to

sleep, was unthinkable.

There was no moon. Low clouds drifted through the starlight. The stillness of the jungle lay upon them. There was the far off drone of surf, half rhythmic, like a dying pulse beat, and the vague sighing stir of wind that rattled the branches of the towering ironwood tree that overshadowed the house. In spite of Hall's effort to keep a conversation going, he would lapse into reflective silence, moodily pull his beard and gaze off into the darkness as if waiting for something.

Coleman, carrying the lantern, came back. He grinned unpleasantly, jerked a thumb toward Captain Bill and said:

"His niggers is drunk—dead drunk. They must've opened a half dozen more bottles."

Captain Bill seemed drowsily inattentive; but he fearfully suspected that what Coleman said was true. He had had an overconfident trust in his boys, who were faithfully brave as any men. But with whisky in reach, and the taste of it in their mouths, they had not been able to control themselves, and so got drunk.

Coleman sat down on the veranda railing, and the lantern hung down outside it. He began to swing it, as if idly, back and forth, back and forth. Thompson absently fingered his beard, glancing out of the corners of his eyes. Hall forgot to talk, but sat with a look of dull brooding, as if listening.

A voice out in the dark yelled, then called:

"Hey, they're comin'! We can see 'em sneakin' up!"

Shots were fired in a ragged volley. There was a popping flicker from rifles over the top of the stockade where men stood together on the footrests. Yells went up out in the darkness. Coleman put down the lantern.

Jeanne gave a nervous cry and jumped to her feet. Miss McKenzie arose, facing toward the sound of the firing.

"Come on!" Hall shouted, jumping up, overturning his chair and giving Captain Bill a slap on the back to arouse him.

"They're attackin'!" Thompson screamed. "Come on!"

He laid a hand on Bill's shoulder. Coleman, with one foot over the veranda rail, looked back watchfully at Captain Bill.

Captain Bill arose with a lurch, paused in a quick glance all about, then, with a powerful sweep of his arm, sent Thompson over backward and at the same time jerked his rifle from him.

"Come on then! I'll show you how to make a fight of it!" Captain Bill roared, and with a rush was over the veranda rail.

He struck the ground with a stagger, swayed to get his balance, then disappeared into the darkness.

Captain Bill ran on bare feet. The men who came with clumsy haste after him were running in boots. They shouted vaguely—

"Give 'em hell!"

"We're comin'!"

"Give 'em hell, Sam!"

Yelling and shouting went on at the stockade—the rifles of six men, the voices of six men.

The running men stopped short up at the stockade, and bent their heads, peering. Coleman held a leveled revolver waist high.

"Hey, Captain!" Thompson called.

"Captain Jones!" said Coleman, almost confidentially.

"Where is he, Sam?" Hall asked, breathing hard.

"How the hell do I know?" Sam answered angrily. "You fellows was to bring 'im. Go on, keep yellin' there, you black devils, you! Though it's damn foolishness, I call it. Bah!"

"I'm with you there!" said Coleman, quietly but contemptuously. Adding with a sneer, "But Hall and Thompson —oh, no, they wouldn't shock the ladies. Where is that—" Vicious names that he would never have used to Captain Bill's face reeled off his tongue.

They were looking about, peering over the dark ground. The Malaita blacks yelped half heartedly and fired off their rifles.

"Damn it, hurry up," said the irritable Sam. "We'll use up no end o' shells."

"Captain Jones?" Thompson called pleadingly.

"He was drunk," said Hall. "He must've just fell down an' laid there. Didn't he come this way, Sam?"

"I don't know what way he come. I was busy with this damn fool play-actin'. If I'd had my way about it, I'd have filled him full o' shot—him an' his niggers, there on the beach. Had it over with. All this monkey business—" Sam's voice trailed off in scornful grumbling.

"Where can he have got to?" asked Thompson.

"Begins to look to me as if he'd got away from us," said Coleman.

"He was drunk. He didn't know what he was doin'," Hall protested.

"But there's no place he could get to," Thompson said.

"Ain't, hunh?" Sam growled in a tone that hinted at something the others seemed to understand well enough, but none of them replied.

"Well, we've got to look till we find 'im. That's all there is to it," said Hall. "I think he jus' fell down, drunk."

"I don't believe he was drunk at all," Coleman answered in a temper. "He put a job on us, that's what."

"But what can he do, one man alone?"

"He can run off an' hide."

"We've got to kill 'im." That was Coleman. "I'd have killed 'im long ago, but Mr. Hall, here, an' Mr. Thompson, they didn't want to shock the ladies!"

"You stow that line, o' talk," Hall growled menacingly, with a command in his deep voice that carried force. "I ain't ever stopped at nothin'. An' you know it. But there's ways an' means o' doin' things. It's better to have them women think we're fine fellows than to have 'em yellin' an' screamin'—like that other one!"

"Huh," said Sam, scornfully. "I don't care how much they yell. A bat over the head—if it's hard enough—does the work."

"Supposin' he finds out what's happened?" Thompson gasped fearfully.

"We'll find *him* first."

"But who's he ever goin' get the chance to tell it to?"

"That's right. He can't get away."

"How are we ever goin' to get away from here ourselves?"

"Who wants to go?" said the savage Sam. "We got women an' food—an' whisky."

"Go fetch the lanterns. Leave candles for the women. Hurry up, Tom."

"What'll I tell them women?"

"Tell 'em he got hurt an' wandered off drunk. We've got to find 'im—an' take care of 'im!"

"Take care of 'im—yes," said Coleman, and his tone had the sound of a hiss.

CHAPTER IX

EXIT MR. THOMPSON

CAPTAIN BILL had run straight toward the popping rifles, recklessly not caring now whether or not they thought him drunk. He had much the same sort of feeling that a prisoner has when he makes a break for liberty, and he knew that he was in for a hazardous game of hide-and-seek. Running, he had slowed down and crouched low on bare tiptoes, darting off at an angle to come into the heavy shadow cast by the stockade wall. With backward glances he had seen, against the glow of lanterns on the veranda, the lumbering forms of Hall, Thompson and Coleman running. He had drawn his cutlass and carried it so there would be no rattling.

"I'm goin' to be harder to find than an honest man in hell," said Captain Bill; adding, as he hurried on with face turned backward, "Yet I guess some of 'em go there. Like me—if I died sudden."

A confused jumble of thoughts swirled across his mind. He half laughed to think that they had thought a little yelling and shooting, "all on one side the fence," would pass for an attack of savages. Captain Bill knew what these men did not seem ever to have heard: Not one savage tribe in a hundred would stir out to make an attack in the night. Even in the Solomons the raiders waited for dawn.

"Cannibals are as scairt o' the dark as I'd be o' ghosts—if I'd ever seen any!"

Going in a wide circle, he was cutting back toward the house, and approached it from the far side, coming up toward

the corner where he had left his boys. He came up cautiously. Tongan Harry, if not dead drunk, had ears like a cat. It was very dark here. The big ironwood reached out its arm-like branches as if holding a heavy mantle.

"Harry!" he called in a low whisper.

No answer. Hot, abusive oaths gushed along Captain Bill's tongue, but were smothered down. He reached gropingly through the braces on which the veranda rail rested and caught hold of a leg, shook it and pinched. He did not know whose leg it was, but he left a bruise there. A kind of blubbering snore was the only sound.

"They'll kill 'em, sure," he said. "Carry 'em off somewhere an' let the Malaita blacks knock in their heads. Maybe do it right here without carryin' 'em off. I got to save 'em somehow—so I can skin 'em alive when they get sober. An' any place they're stowed inside this stockade, they'll get found. On top o' that, it'll help scare them fellows to death if they find my boys have disappeared. I could drag 'em under the house," Bill reflected, but shook his head. "They'd be found. No—no place short of clear outside the stockade. An' I've got to look slippy!"

He set down the rifle; then, on cautious tiptoes, he ran around to the other side of the house, keeping well down below the level of the veranda floor which was almost waist high, being set on piers of coral rock.

He could hear vaguely the irritated voices of the men as they trampled about and argued over at the stockade wall. Rifles were being fired now and then to keep up the pretense of an attack.

The three women stood together at the veranda rail, anxiously peering. They did not know that all this commotion was a false alarm.

Bill crept fairly close.

"Shh-h! Listen up there—"

They gave a nervous backward start.

"Who's that?" Jeanne gasped.

"Me—" said Bill.

"Oh!"

"Believe whatever they tell you ain't so! But be nice to 'em. An' stay right there together. An', Miss 'Kenzie," he said hastily, slurring the name, "if you *got* to shoot anybody, make sure it's Coleman first. You hear me?"

"Yes!" she said between clenched teeth, with her eyes fixed straight out into the darkness. Her hand adjusted the sling under her arm.

"Then—then, Captain Bill," Jeanne called in a half apologetic whisper, leaning forward, "y-you aren't d-drunk!"

"Never in my life—'fore ladies!" said Bill indignantly.

They heard the faint patter of his feet as he turned, running along below the veranda. As he ran, Bill replaced the cutlass. Reaching the other side of the veranda, he climbed up quickly, felt about, got hold of an unconscious body, heaved it up and let it slide over the rail and to the ground. He guessed that it was Charley. The next he knew for the Tongan halfbreed.

"Overboard, you dogs!"

On hands and knees he groped about again, clutched a body, held on a moment, then jerked his hand away. The other bodies had been as limber as old rope. This one was cold and rigid. His fingers searched for some mark of identification, and came to a bandage bound about the breast. Kluckeroo. Bill understood. They had let him gulp whisky like water. Dead drunk, he had died.

Bill nodded in the darkness, thinking:

"Just as well. That arrow was poisoned, I bet. Better this way than to go out with lockjaw. Good old devil . . ."

He found Malgo, the other wounded man. He was utterly unconscious, but not rigid.

"Damn! That fancy idea o' actin' drunk has put me in a pickle."

He thought it best to leave Malgo.

"He'll most likely wake up dead anyhow. They know he's bad hurt. But I've got one more to 'tend to!"

He heaved the third man over the rail —ran the fingers of one hand deep into the bushy hair and caught hold under an armpit with the other. Then he jumped lightly off the veranda.

THE bodies of these men were limp. Charley was the tallest, so Bill put him across his shoulders.

"Just wrap 'im around my neck," was his silent comment.

He crouched down and caught hold of the others, getting an arm around their bellies. He arose slowly, staggering a little until he caught his balance. Their mere five hundred pounds of dead weight was not anything much for him to carry, particularly under the stress of excitement; but the two in his arms were awkward to hold.

"I can't let their feet drag. That'd make a trail—an' them fellows'll be all over the place soon with lanterns."

He had to walk in a sort of half crouch so as to keep Charley's body in place on his shoulders. Also he had to hold the two men he carried high enough off the ground not to let their feet trail. And he hurried, not knowing how much time he might have.

He went straight to the far stockade wall, wanting to get up close to it so he would be less easily seen if anybody came around the house.

There he dropped the bodies, turned about, working the muscle strain out of his arms and looking toward the house. He saw a man with two lanterns moving away from the house and returning to where Hall, Coleman and the others were still peering about over the ground. They just could not get it through their heads that Bill had not been drunk. It was easy to say, "Maybe he wasn't," and wonder; but why had he acted drunk? Anyhow, they fully expected to find him lying unconscious somewhere.

Bill left his boys on the ground and crept along toward the stockade gate, moving rapidly but watching the lanterns and the shadows that crisscrossed and zigzagged through their light. When he was near the gate he saw them begin to move toward him. They were spread out in a kind of haphazard line—all the white men and the blacks too—covering the ground much as boys do when they have lost a ball.

Bill swore noiselessly and crouched low.

"You blunderheaded fools," he said in protest, "why do you think—me bein' drunk—I'd've run clear around here!"

They came on, straggling about. The blacks were not much interested, and the white men were half quarreling. He could hear every word they said.

"This is all damn foolishness." That was a voice he did not recognize, and so knew it must be that of the beardless fellow who had been in charge of the blacks. "What of it, whether he's drunk or not—or where he's gone? What we care? He can't do nothin'."

"I'm goin' to look till I find 'im—an' kill him!'

"I tell you what," said Hall's deep voice. "I bet he's hid 'cause he's scared."

"Then maybe he dodged back up there an' got into the house," Thompson, some distance away, called.

"Let's go ask them women," said Sam with interest. "I ain't seen 'em yet, you know. You fellows have had the 'vantage."

They had come into a line between the stockade gate and house, and Bill was not twenty feet away, huddled down under the foot boards placed at intervals, like rough benches, on which men could stand to fire over the walls.

He crouched, bracing himself, ready to leap up and scramble over the walls. That would be his only way out if they caught sight of him. One man against nine, and they with firearms. But they would then surely find his drunken boys and kill them. And he, outside the stockade, would be helpless. He might be able to crawl back unseen—and might not.

But Coleman had called out—

"Hey, Tom!" His voice was unfriendly.

Thompson stopped short, turning.

"What you want?" He asked it irritably. Their voices sounded as though they did not like each other.

"Give me that lantern."

"Give you nothin'."

"The rest o' you damn fools—" that was Sam—"can do what you like. Me an' Coleman are goin' back up to the house an' search it. He's there if he ain't dead drunk. An' if he is dead drunk, who the hell cares where he is? Get that lantern, Cole."

"Give me that lantern," Coleman repeated.

"Who you talkin' to like that?"

"You!"

"Go to hell!"

"You will, right here an' now!" Coleman said and thrust out a revolver.

"Oh—don't!" Thompson cried, draw-

ing back, offering the lantern, raising the other arm.

Hall came up, protesting.

The blacks edged away, interested, but not interfering with white men when they quarreled.

There was a jumble of words, angry tones, oaths. Captain Bill, crouching low, squeezing up against the shadows, was half hopeful that they would fight.

Then Coleman's high pitched voice rose above the jumble as, lifting the lantern to Thompson's face, he said:

"We might as well settle it now. That little halfbreed girl is mine. An' you keep 'way from 'er. What'd you say?"

The lantern was almost against Thompson's face, the point of Coleman's revolver almost against his stomach. Hall, with a move as if to knock it aside, said—

"You damn fools!"

But Sam caught hold of Hall's arm angrily.

"Let 'em alone. They're always quarrelin'. Let 'em have it out."

"What'd you say?" Coleman repeated.

"I don't care," Thompson answered sullenly.

"Well, I do. You stay away from 'er then. I've seen you!"

"Tom can have the ol' one armed girl," said Sam contemptuously. "Come on, Cole. Let's go up an' look 'em over. Hall an' Tom can go on lookin' for that fellow if they want."

Hall turned about quickly, starting toward the house. He was not going to let these two men be alone with the women. The blacks, without being told, straggled after Sam. They moved along quickly in the glow of lantern light, like men suddenly purposeful.

CAPTAIN BILL scarcely glanced aside. His eyes were on Thompson who, though only some twenty feet away, stood so close to the stockade wall that he could be but dimly seen. For a time he stood as motionless as one of the posts, then he muttered oaths. There was a kind of bitter helplessness in the words, as if in his heart he knew he hadn't the courage to do more than curse. It was very much as if he had been kicked out by his companions. He coughed, clearing his throat. A moment later there was the scratch of a match as he raised it toward his pipe. The flare of it threw the light into his face as he bent forward.

Captain Bill glanced over his shoulder. One of the lanterns was already on the veranda, the other on the steps.

"Here goes!" Bill said to himself, and leaped.

Thompson, with the pipe in his mouth, the match almost against his nose, squeaked, half gagged by fright, and shuffled backward. Pipe and match dropped, and Thompson, with a vague motion toward his holster flap, turned to run and opened his mouth to yell.

Captain Bill rushed powerfully. His arm swept around Thompson's throat. Bill clamped the crook of his elbow under Thompson's bearded chin and jerked him backward against the drive of a lifted knee, then swung him from side to side, choking him. The knotted hemp that should have been about Thompson's throat would not have been more strangling than the clamp of Bill's thick arm. Thompson writhed in a hopeless struggle, kicking weakly, plucking at the hawser-like arm. The hoarse gurgle of a drowning man was in his throat. Thompson collapsed. His helpless struggle became a mere unconscious twitching. Bill looked toward the house, watching, listening. There was not a sound.

"Now what to do with 'im?" Captain Bill asked himself. "If they find 'im, they'll know I done it an' be on guard."

Then Bill remembered that he was right there within a hand's reach of the stockade gate. He let Thompson sink to the ground, but put a hand to his throat, watchfully. He took Thompson's revolver and slipped it into his own holster. He took away the knife and flipped it high over the wall, outside.

Captain Bill hesitated; then, knowing very well that Thompson was unconscious, perhaps dead, he stood up, fumbled with the bars of the gate and pushed them back. He pulled at the gate. It was heavy. Two men usually opened it. And not being on hinges, it was likely to squeak like a thing in

pain. Bill himself had helped Stanton mount it and weld the broad iron hoops that served as hinges. The gate did squeak. Sounds in the night stillness seemed loud and carried far. Bill apprehensively peered toward the house, but all was quiet up there.

He pulled the gate open about three feet. Stanton had built it wide enough for a wagon to drive through.

Bill picked Thompson up, carried him outside and dropped him.

"He ain't dead, I bet; but he ought to be. If he comes to—"

Bill could no more kill an unconscious man than he could strangle a baby. There was nothing else to do but tie and gag him.

He tore off Thompson's shirt, stripping pieces from it. He pulled open the slack mouth and stuffed the rags into it, wadding them. Then he bound a sleeve about his mouth, knotting it at the back of his head.

He loosened Thompson's belt and pulled it out, then tied his feet together tightly.

"Now for his wrists," said Bill, pausing, wondering how to secure them.

He remembered the ball of heavy twine in his pocket. He cut a length of some three feet on the edge of the cutlass, and tied Thompson's wrists behind him.

"He'll keep!" said Captain Bill, and went after his sailors. He made two trips, bringing Harry last.

"I hope I don't forget to drag 'em in before daylight," he muttered, gazing off toward the black tangle of jungle. "Them cannibals can have this Thompson for breakfast if they want 'im, but—"

Captain Bill stiffened, pulled at an ear and slowly grinned as he peered down at the drunken bodies.

"My best idea," he muttered, "an' I just thought of it. If I can get whisky to them Malaita blacks—enough of it —they'll get dead drunk too!"

Captain Bill heaved the gate to and slipped the bars back into place, then followed the stockade wall until he came opposite the side of the veranda where his boys had been drunk. He peered hard, listening, but saw no movement in the shadows, heard no voices. He moved forward cautiously, keeping low, with a hand on the cutlass so that it would not drag.

"They're so busy talkin' to the women they haven't found my boys are gone, else they'd be jumpin' about like a lot o' fleas on a hot skillet. But them blacks may be squattin' around somewhere close by. Blacks at night huddle up close. The best of 'em won't stand no lone watches."

Bill was not used to creeping about furtively. He had to hold himself in, to remind himself over and over that this was a time for caution. So he got down on his knees and almost crawled.

When he was near the house he began to hear the mumble of men's voices. Now and then there was a kind of laugh —Hall's laugh. Bill took that as a good sign. He knew they had not yet discovered that his boys were gone, else they wouldn't be sitting there talking with women. They would be scurrying about, or have the house surrounded.

He approached the veranda on the opposite side from them, and hovered there, listening, for now he could overhear much that was said. Hall was doing nearly all the talking and, in a hearty way meant to be pleasant, was telling what brave men they were and what adventures they had been through.

Bill's hand touched the rifle that he had left standing there when he started to carry off his boys. He felt that he had no use for the gun now. Needed his hands free. Besides, he had Thompson's revolver. Yet he was reluctant to discard a good weapon.

A tangle of thoughts spun through his mind—vague, desperate notions, the glimpse of things that might be done, half realized possibilities. He shook his head at his own thoughts.

"If I only knew where them blacks are—an' whisky's my best chance."

He placed the rifle where he could readily pick it up again, then cautiously heaved himself up on to the veranda. His eyes were used to the dark, but he could see nothing clearly. He groped forward, moving as carefully as a thief. He found the doorway and stepped inside. It was even darker.

He wanted to light a match, but did not dare. The glimmering flare of it

might be seen. He stopped, bent low, and swung his hand all about over the floor; then moved a little and again reached searchingly. He was trying to find one of the dresses that he had seen lying there, like rags. He found it, gathered it up, then moved cautiously toward the cupboard chest.

He opened the doors and reached within. Carefully he drew out one bottle after another.

"Five blacks—a bottle apiece. Gabriel himself couldn't wake 'em up."

With as much care as was possible in the dark, he wrapped the bottles in the dress, making sure they wouldn't clink. He made up a bundle that could be carried in one hand. He wanted the other free in case he needed it.

"I wonder what they're goin' to do? They can't set up an' talk all night. Forgot all about me, too, it looks like. An' Thompson, too. You know, I'll bet it wouldn't have taken as many words as to box the compass to make Thompson join with me—just to get even with that Coleman."

As he crept from the room, Bill hugged his package more tightly and grinned in the darkness.

CHAPTER X

BILL CLOSES AN ACCOUNT

ONE lantern was on the table; another had been hung on a peg in a nearby post; and two candles glimmered weakly near Miss McKenzie. The candles had been left and lighted when Thompson took away the lanterns.

Miss McKenzie's long, gaunt face was now longer and more drawn as she sat stiffly upright, saying very little; but, as Bill had told her to do, praying with her eyes open. They were gray, hard eyes. The line of her lips was more than ever like a healed scar. She was weary and in pain. Her forefathers had been Scotchmen, Covenanters, and she was no weakling daughter of their blood. She believed in God, and she believed in Captain Bill. That faith sustained her. And she was angry. Time and again her hands twitched at the concealing fold of the sling in which her injured arm rested uncomfortably. But Captain Bill's warning had been, "Be nice to them."

She had no way of judging time except by the burning of the candles, and they seemed to burn very, very slowly. Miss McKenzie, down deep in her heart, was wretchedly humbled, too. Right there in front of her eyes that black bearded Coleman was sitting with his arm about Lalee, and across the table from him this fellow Sam, who had small, mean eyes, stared at Lalee and at Coleman. And Miss McKenzie made no protest.

Lalee was submissive as a doll, and as unresponsive. Her pretty little face looked very tired. Coleman, taking whisky from his pocket—each of these men had a bottle in his pocket—had poured a drink into a coffee cup, pressing it upon her. She made quick little sounds of protest, with a kind of butterfly flutter of the hands. Coleman tried to tease her coaxingly.

Sam stared with a sneering twist on his mouth, and a look of jealous hunger in his eyes. He, like Coleman, thought Lalee much prettier than Jeanne, who was shivering as if half frozen.

"Sam, you'd better go see what your niggers are doin'," said Coleman, not liking the way he stared at Lalee.

"Aw, they're all right," Sam answered.

"Best to have a look at 'em, Sam," Hall put in.

"You fellows want to know, go an' see for yourselves. I've stood my watch. 'Sides," said Sam sarcastically, "I'm learnin' how to make women think I'm handsome!"

Hall had pulled at Jeanne's unresisting arm and taken her chilled hand between his fingers, and Coleman had moved nearer to Lalee. Such timid advances to women who could not help themselves did not appeal to Sam.

"They may be asleep," said Coleman.

"Let 'em," said Sam.

"Go fetch a couple more bottles, Sam," Hall said, emptying the one before him.

"Go yourself."

"Wonder where Tom is?" Hall said, twisting about.

"You fellows hurt his feelin's," Sam

suggested. "I guess he's over there with the niggers."

"Come along with me, Sam." Hall got up and reached for a lantern. "We'll both go. I want to talk to you."

"Go where?"

"After some bottles."

"Don't trust me, huh?" Sam jerked his head cynically toward Jeanne. "You could, all right."

He looked toward Lalee, saying nothing, but the inference was plain.

"Come along, Sam. We've got to talk something over. You'd better come too, Cole." Coleman looked up suspiciously. "We can't set here all night, you know—like this."

"You fellows seem willin'," said Sam, jeering.

Hall arose, took the lantern from the peg and stood holding it.

"Come on. We got to talk."

Sam arose sluggishly.

"You comin', Cole? I don't go if you don't."

Coleman eyed him, then got up.

They moved off around the veranda. Sam, in a low, jeering voice, was sarcastic.

"It was that girl today killin' herself," Hall muttered. "I don't want it to happen again—like that."

"Bah," said Sam. "They ain't got nothin' to kill 'emselves with. An' no woman ever holds her breath till she dies—just 'cause she don't like you. I know!"

"But they can scream," said Hall.

"Who cares?"

Hall held up the lantern, looking down.

"What we goin' to do with those drunk niggers o' his?"

Sam kicked one of the bodies.

"But where are the others!" said Coleman suddenly. "They were all here—Bring that lantern!"

"Gone!" said Hall.

"They weren't drunk at all!" Sam shouted.

"Then *he* wasn't drunk either!" said Hall, struck with fear.

"We're in for it," Coleman gasped, suddenly drawing back from the darkness that lay beyond the veranda.

"Get your blacks up here, Sam," Hall shouted. "Go get 'em!"

"Where's Tom?" Sam asked, and his tone showed what he feared.

"I bet they've got him," Hall said huskily. "Your niggers, Sam. Call 'em. Go get 'em!"

"Go to hell! I'm not goin' out there—an' get caught like they caught Tom."

"Call 'em up here."

Sam bawled into the darkness:

"Hi, you blacks sons o' hell! Where are you? Come up here. Hi, boys! Boys!"

They all leaned forward, listening. No answer. Only the sighing stir of the wind and the far off sound of surf.

"Put down that lantern. Get away from it," said Coleman, sweeping an arm into the darkness. "They may be aimin' right now!"

All of them jumped aside, and a moment later squeezed through the doorway. Hall still held the lantern, but concealed the light as much as possible.

"He's out there with them devils o' his—"

"I wanted to kill 'em right there on the beach!" Sam growled. "But, no, you fellows—"

"I did too," said Coleman angrily. "Them blacks o' ours must be asleep."

"Sleep, hell!" said Sam. "They're too scairt to sleep. They're dead, or—that's it! They knew him! They wanted to talk to him. He's got them! What the hell are we goin' to do now?"

Then Hall, who was their leader, showed why he was the chief. He grabbed at Sam's arm, but spoke to both men, lowering his voice:

"Quick, the women! They won't dare hurt us while we've got them women! Get 'em into the house—in a room—all us together!"

THEY ran through the house and to the other side of the veranda. The stormy trample of their feet, the loud words, the yelling for the Malaita blacks, had terrified the women. Lalee's dark eyes glistened with fright as she glided behind Miss McKenzie and clutched at Jeanne, who had leaped from her seat, moving away from the approaching men.

"We're trapped!" Hall yelled.

"Here, you." Coleman snatched at Lalee.

She squealed and jerked away. There

was the rip of cloth. Coleman swore, looked at the piece of torn rag in his hand, flung it aside.

"None o' that!" he shouted, and grabbed at her bare shoulder.

"I'll take care o' you!" Sam said savagely as he caught Jeanne by the neck, pulling at her.

Miss McKenzie stepped back, her hand working at the fold of the sling. The cloth had caught about the hammer of the revolver and it would not come free.

"Grab that ol' hag!" Sam shouted at Hall.

He had Jeanne off her feet, half dragging her. She screamed again and again. He struck at her.

There were cries, oaths, a trample and sounds of struggle over the springy floor of split bamboo. Then there came a voice out of the darkness nearby, a roaring shout:

"It's all over, you dogs o' hell!" What Captain Bill called them was not inaccurate. "Put up your hands! Let go them women! You're surrounded! Thompson's here with me—an' my boys too! Hey, Harry—shoot an' let 'em know you're there!"

Some twenty feet off from the sound of Bill's voice a rifle blazed overhead; and its echo was still ringing when Captain Bill called out:

"Good work, Harry. But now you boys keep still while I do the talkin'! Let go them women!"

As he spoke he came running. They could hear the soft patter of his feet; and then he appeared out of the shadows, pausing below the veranda, peering up, a revolver in one hand, cutlass in the other.

Coleman and Sam had paused, twisting about, at Captain Bill's first shout. They had not released Lalee and Jeanne who, in startled hope, had turned their touseled heads. As Captain Bill came close, Jeanne began to struggle again.

Hall dashed the lantern aside, flinging it over the rail as he yelled and started around the table to get to the doorway.

"They don't dare shoot! The women —bring 'em!"

The next instant, with hurried aim, he shot toward Captain Bill—again and again. He knew, because of the women, Captain Bill and his natives would not dare shoot back.

Again there was confusion on the veranda — the clatter of overturned chairs, screams, Hall's bull-like shouting, angered oaths that a woman's strength should be so desperate. Coleman, with fingers buried deep in Lalee's dark hair, wrenched her from her feet, dragging her.

Then Coleman felt something prod him in the side. A sharp, hard voice said—

"I'll kill you!"

He jerked his face about and, with frightened wonder, saw the gaunt Miss McKenzie standing close beside him. He could not understand. Death seemed to be staring at him right through her eyes. He swore at her, swung back the revolver he held, pointing it, then right below his armpit there was a muffled shot. Coleman, dead on his feet, lurched against her, falling. She stumbled over an overturned chair. With one arm useless, she thrust out with the other to catch herself, and so dropped the revolver. She was bumped against, knocked this way and that by Sam and Hall, who were both pulling at Jeanne.

They too stumbled over a chair, stepped on Coleman, tripped each other. If they had had a wildcat in their hands they would not have been worse off. Jeanne had become a little fiend. She bit like a cat and raked down across Sam's left eye and cheek with nails that took the skin right off his face. She blindly clawed at Hall and, with fingers wrapped in his thick beard, pulled till he howled, cursing and beating at her.

Captain Bill had thrown the cutlass aside as he came up on the veranda. He could not use it in such a mixup as this. He paused as he struck the bamboo flooring to yell, "Let go of her!" then dived straight over the table. Not daring to shoot, he crashed the revolver barrel down on Hall's bushy head. Hall dropped.

At that instant Sam stumbled back with his shoulders against the wall and, fiercely holding Jeanne to his breast as a sort of shield, threw up his revolver. Jeanne screamed and struck upward at his arm as he shot. The bullet went high. Sam cursed her and shot again.

The bullet clipped hair from Captain Bill's head. Bill dared not shoot, and he needed two hands. He dropped the gun as he sprang off the table and, with both hands grasping Sam's arm, pulled it aside and down as the revolver was discharged rapidly.

Sam half knocked the girl away and swung with his free right arm at Captain Bill, who took the blow on the back of his head and went down—more because of the slippery footing on the split bamboo than because of Sam's fist.

And as he went down, Sam came too, right on top of him—yelping with pain, for his wrist was caught in a wrenching twist that loosened the grip. He struck furiously with his loose arm, then shouted in sudden fear, and tried to pull free as he felt the muzzle of the revolver prodding his side. There was an empty click. That was all. Captain Bill had pulled the trigger, but the revolver was empty.

"Ain't luck enough in the world to save you!" Captain Bill growled as they went into a rough and tumble that carried them under the table.

The heave of their thrashing bodies overturned the other lantern, and candles. The veranda was in darkness.

They squirmed, struck blindly, gouged. Jeanne called frantically:

"Harry! Oh, Harry, come!"

And little Lalee squealed for Charley; and both girls ran to the veranda railing, staring into the darkness and calling. There was no answer but the echoes of their frightened voices, and even the echoes were dimmed by the uproar of the struggle. Then there was the bellow of Hall's voice as he came dizzily to consciousness:

"Get 'im out from under there! Get 'im out! I'll help you!"

The next moment Hall overturned the table and fell on the squirming bodies, groping for Captain Bill.

Captain Bill had been through any number of rough and tumble fights. He struck with knees, elbows and fists, kicked, butted, caught Hall's beard and drove his head against Sam's face—all in a tangle of locked and squirming bodies. They cursed him in gasps. Sam's teeth clicked like a wolf's as he snapped, trying to bite—then the drive of Captain Bill's elbow loosened the teeth in his mouth.

After the first minute or two of struggle, Captain Bill felt Sam weaken—or relax deliberately. There must be none of that. He couldn't fight two men if they took turns at resting. In a flash, Captain Bill—thankful for the heavy beard—wrenched Hall's head to one side and whipped the crook of a knee about his throat, stiffening the other leg and hooking a foot under it; then with both hands free he fastened on Sam's throat.

Sam beat at Captain Bill's face, caught his hair and yanked, poked at his eyes with gouging thumbs. But Captain Bill buried his face against his own forearms, avoiding the thumbs, and let Sam yank with all of his strength at his hair.

Sam's breath came in a gasping wheeze, and he writhed with convulsive jerks. Hall was gurgling. He beat the floor with his booted feet and clawed at the empty air itself in frenzied terror and pain. Captain Bill's fingers ached with the cramp of muscular strain, and his legs hurt as if he were being tortured; but with quivering jerks that shook his body he drew more strength out of his muscles, tightening the holds, hanging on. He shut his eyes and, with open mouth, himself gasped for breath as if he too were being strangled. His great body quivered again and again as he tightened his holds. He would not let go. He meant never to let go. His fingers and legs were simply frozen. Black dizziness swam across his closed eyes, but he held on . . .

LIGHT seemed to touch his face, a soft hand went across his hair, and he heard a voice that pleaded low and anxiously:

"Captain Bill! Captain Bill!"

He blinked into the candle that Jeanne held almost against his face, and gazed at her staringly.

"Oh, I was afraid you—you too were dead!"

"Me? Dead? No."

He looked at his fingers. They were stiff, half crooked, and they ached. He pushed them against one palm and then the other, straightening them. His knee

was still pressed against the throat of Hall, his leg hooked under the man's heavy body.

Captain Bill rubbed at his eyes with a forearm and sighed.

"Whew! I can't get my leg loose."

"But, Harry, and Charley—why didn't they come?" said Jeanne, bitterly reproachful.

Captain Bill wrinkled his bruised face into a kind of grin, shrugged and shook his head.

"They wasn't there! Maybe I'm not much good at lyin'."

"But who fired that rifle?"

Bill grinned like a mischievous schoolboy as he said:

"Me. I tied it to a tree. Tied a string to it."

"Oh? And those big Malaita blacks?"

"Drunk. I just crept down to near where I knew they was—had broke the neck off one bottle. Spilled it around over the ground. They got noses like dogs—for whisky. They found it. Bottle apiece. They got drunk so quick they didn't have time to feel good!"

"Oh—and to think I thought you w-were drunk!"

"Well, I been it enough times in my life." He had picked himself up and was rubbing at his legs. "If there's a spot on me they didn't hit, I ain't found it yet. What a day this has been—an' it ain't mornin' yet!"

Then he noticed Miss McKenzie who was standing silently at his side, gazing at him.

"Hello!" he said. And she looked at him so strangely and in silence so long that he asked, "What's the matter, Miss McKenzie?"

Her lips quivered.

"Captain Bill—"

Her voice broke, her gray eyes filled with tears and she blinked rapidly. She put out her hand, touched his arm, held it. Her hand trembled. Half crying, but smiling, too, she said in a low voice that was almost a whisper—

"Captain Bill, I've always had the wrong idea about what an angel looks like!"

But little Lalee, without a word, simply huddled against him, clinging to him as she wept with her head against his breast.

CHAPTER XI

JEANNE ASKS A QUESTION

THE squat halfbreed, Harry, was walking slowly and noiselessly around and around the veranda. He looked sad, woebegone, ashamed of himself. Almost every time he passed the kitchen he paused to drink black coffee, then carried a big tin and offered it to each of the two other men who paced wearily back and forth at the corners where they had been put on guard. They too looked woebegone and ashamed of themselves.

The three were bruised by the pinches and slaps that Captain Bill had given them, together with dousings of water out of the cistern and much abuse, as he roused them out of their drunken stupor. Then followed black coffee and food, and more berating.

Captain Bill swore that he was through with them; said he'd cut out their tongues and sell them to planters on Fiji. They knew he didn't mean it, but they felt that that was just about what ought to be done with them.

Tongan Harry was not greatly amazed at finding three white men dead, and the other bound, gagged and lying in a huddle on the ground at the foot of the veranda steps; nor at finding the Malaita blacks down near the stockade wall, lying about like dead pigs—drunk. Harry had the child-like belief that Captain Bill could do anything; but he did feel deeply ashamed of himself.

He protested that he had not meant to get drunk, but was tired and hungry, and the little taste of whisky Captain Bill had given was so good and warming that he and the other boys had simply pilfered more bottles.

Captain Bill wouldn't listen. From now on, he told them cuttingly, he wouldn't have anybody but women on board his ship. Could trust women. They stayed sober—and would fight, too.

"You don't know what a tiger is," said Bill. "But it's just a kitten 'longside of a woman that don't like you!"

They had found the murdered bodies of Stanton's family, which had been

hastily dumped into a shallow grave behind the blacks' sleeping quarters. The bodies had been hurriedly buried before Hall and his men had ventured down to the beach, attracted by the fight that the *Merry Maid* had made in the bay. Then Sam and the Malaita blacks had been sent back up to the stockade to make sure that all signs of the massacre had been cleared away.

Thompson readily told all about it. He, tightly bound and gagged, had seemed afraid that he would choke to death from the wadding of rags in his mouth, and had writhed, trying to beg for mercy.

Bill was not merciful. He took the gag away, but would not loosen Thompson's hands or feet.

"You talk, an' I'll leave it out. If you don't tell me what I want to know, I'll ram it down your throat with my heel! Who the hell are you, an' what you doin' here, you fellows?"

Thompson said that some two or three years before they had gone to Australia from California to work in the mines, but had turned to robbery, becoming bushrangers. They did not merely rob, but killed, and became so notorious and hard hunted that they knew they had to get out of the country. Big rewards were on their heads.

They had taken passage on a little schooner bound for Hawaii, then found that the captain had discovered their identity, knew of the reward and meant to get it.

They easily captured the schooner, killed the captain and most of the native crew. They knew nothing of seamanship and could not work the schooner, but drifted about until fire broke out. Then they took to the longboat and reached the island, half dead.

Stanton took them in. A few days later, Thompson said, but was no doubt lying, Stanton acted as if he had guessed who they were and so, of course, would try to get the reward.

They decided that Stanton would have to be killed. The attack had been made the previous morning as soon as Stanton, one of his sons and most of the blacks had left the stockade. They had meant to "spare" the women, but Mrs. Stanton and her daughter fought like men, and had to be killed. The dogs too had attacked them, and were shot. Stanton and his son, finding the gates of their own stockade shut against them and guessing what was going on inside, aroused the savages in the village and charged on the walls. Stanton and his son were soon killed; then the cannibals who had followed the planter into the fight turned on the Malaita blacks who were with them outside the stockade. After that they had gone to the bay and plundered Stanton's cutter, turning it adrift and letting it come ashore on the rocks.

Captain Bill demanded—

"How much your carcasses worth?"

"What d' you mean?"

"That reward you fellows have been so scairt somebody might get—how much is it?"

"A thousand apiece."

"Hmm," said Captain Bill. "Four thousand dollars. That'll get me a new ship. I think I'll name 'er *Jeanne*. Purty name. An' four thousand dollars just for lickin' a couple o' fellows it was a pleasure to do!"

"Dollars, hell," said Thompson. "Pounds!"

Bill blinked and opened his mouth a couple of times to say something, but could not find the right words, he was that amazed. Then he whistled, or tried to. His lips were too swollen and bruised. He tossed away the handful of rags that he had been holding.

"No—no, sir; I wouldn't gag you again. Not after them golden words. Pounds—four thousand!"

CAPTAIN BILL knew that it would be light in another hour or two. His boys were now sober. There would be no danger from the jungle savages until dawn, and he was miserably tired, battered—worn out.

He, as sailors are, was used to snatching a wink of sleep any time he could get it; so he threw himself down on a pallet of mats.

The next thing he knew he was sitting upright with the full flush of a bright morning in his eyes, with Jeanne kneeling by him with both hands on his shoulders.

"They're coming!"

Captain Bill had awakened out of sound sleep. He thought of but one thing, had but one fear, and so pushed at her, cocking his head to listen for yells and shots. But there were no such sounds. It was just a quiet, sunny morning in the jungle.

But from where he sat he saw his boys running toward the stockade gate, and he jumped up, snatching for a rifle. Miss McKenzie was peering through a telescope she had found in the house, resting it against a veranda post.

"What's the matter?" he asked anxiously.

Looking in the same direction, he now could see that people were coming up the hill. From the veranda one had a view over the stockade walls, and he saw that these were white men, with sailors' uniforms among them.

He took the telescope and peered, then began to swear. He had recognized Malloy, Jeanne's uncle, and that pasty fellow, Pleu, who took engagement rings off his wives' fingers when they died.

"They fell in with a gunboat an' come after us—but how the devil did they know where we'd be?"

"Ahiana must have told them," said Jeanne.

"Who's Ah'ana?"

"The pretty waitress—are you sure you don't remember her? At Cloverland's Hotel—"

"Sure I remember her—now. An' they've brought the British navy. Terrible fellow, I am!" Bill grinned. "I stole a missionary an' kidnaped two purty girls!"

"Captain Bill?" Jeanne pressed against him, her arms on his shoulders, and looked steadily into his face. "Please! You oughtn't to make me have to say it again. Didn't you hear me when I awakened you? I asked you—didn't you hear me, Captain Bill?"

"Sure I heard, but how the hell did I know I wasn't dreamin'?"

"Well, you aren't! And if you are really going to marry me, you must do it right now! Before they get here—my uncle and that horrible Pleu!"

Captain Bill wrapped his powerful arm about her and drew her close.

"Let 'em come," he said. "I can lick 'em!"

"But you must marry me—"

"I can't. I've got the right to marry folks at sea, on my own ship. But I can't marry myself."

"They will take me away, or something. I know they will. And they have sailors. And the captain is sure to be a friend of my uncle. And, Captain Bill, I do love you!"

Captain Bill felt his face wonderingly. He knew it was discolored, swollen, bruised. Yet this lovely girl gazed up at him adoringly. He swallowed hard and felt like swearing, but clutched her closer.

"Anybody try to take you away from me—they've got to build bigger gunboats an' hire more sailors! We'll keep that gate shut till they promise—"

Miss McKenzie had come close and was looking at them with a radiant face. She spoke softly, smiled and put out her hand with the gesture of one offering a blessing as she said:

"Captain Bill? Jeanne! As an ordained minister, delegated to work and serve in these islands, I have the right to marry you, here and now. Take her hand, Captain Bill!"

THE END

Palm Oil Ruffian

By T SAMSON MILLER

A HOT wind off the palm oil rivers carried across the ship's deck the sickly sweet scent of aloes and the fetid breath of tropic jungle—odors as familiar to the smokeroom coterie as the rank stogy of the passenger bound for the tin fields of the Nigerian pagan belt, the raw gin of the ivory man or the brier pipe of the thin faced, graying agent who in a few days would be holding down a lonely trading station amid the barbarous rhythms of African drums.

In short, the odors were as familiar as juju tales—and if there was a scoffer, let him get from the ship's library Mary Kingsley's "West Africa". Equally familiar was the "funkitis sport"—the inducing of a state of funk in the newcomer to the land of wizardry—which the ivory man had with a youthful lieutenant till the agent called him down with—

"That's a dirty way of trying to get even, Smith."

The young lieutenant, surprised, said he wasn't aware of giving the ivory man any cause for grudge.

The agent, Mathers, grinned reminiscently and said:

"Nor was I, when I was a youngster getting my first closeup of the land-of-the-white-man's-grave, aware of offending the palm oil ruffian who gave me the funkitis works and put me to a bad time over—well, call it a juju sending . . . And now you fellows want to hear about that?"

* * *

Far from suspecting cause for grudge, young Mathers included the palm oil ruffian in his jubilant good feeling toward everybody. A youth exudes enthusiastic friendship when best dreams have come true. Within a few months of debarking at Burutu, which in those days was the entry port of the since defunct Royal Niger Company, Mathers commanded a dugout and a dozen paddlers. He was on his way to relieve the agent of the N'kassa station.

Three hours out of Burutu, the dugout crawling between dense walls of mangrove and palm, Mathers's boy, Johnny Jumps—to give the idle naming of a former massa who found the native name too much of a tongue twister—discovered a stowaway snoozing behind a pile made by bedroll and kit under a midship reed awning. In appearance the fellow ran to type—sweat grimed undershirt, canvas trousers, the remnants of shoes, a stubbled face. But in manner he lacked the abashment, or the effrontery, of the stowaway.

Stooping forth from under the awn-

ing, he straightened up, tall and bony, his lean face topped with short cropped dark hair touched with gray over the ears. His gray eyes were set in sun puckered dells under bushy brows on each side of a De Bergerac beak.

After a quizzical look at Mathers he volunteered a raucous reflection—

"How'd they come to pitch a green sprig into the N'kassa agency?"

Then, with Mathers squirmily conscious of the gaping paddlers and the impertinent curiosity of Johnny Jumps, the "ruffian" blandly added that they were headed the same way and ought to hit it off without any fuss. The lean face twisted in an indescribably sardonic grimace. Or rather, the left side of the face grimaced, the right half remaining expressionless. Later on Mathers was to learn that Richard Crawford, palm oil ruffian, had lost control of his facial muscles through sunstroke of the motor nerve in the neck.

Well, the man was there. There was nothing Mathers could do about it. He could not, even had he been so minded, maroon Crawford on one of the delta islands. In the deep, narrow well of the dugout, in the lane of the swaying bodies of the paddlers along the gunwales, the stowaway's lean length gave him the whip hand.

In fact, he soon supplanted Mathers in command, not arrogantly, but by knowledge of the paddlers' dialect. Mathers floundered in sign language. Also, to Mathers's discomfiture, the paddlers, whose tribal mark of a deep gash down their wide, negroid noses gained them the name of the Slit Noses, intuitively recognized in Crawford a leader.

Another subtle line of attack—had Mathers but known he was being given the funkitis works—was a belittling way of speaking of R. N. C. men, the company's officers. He referred to them as quinine swallowers, bonus chasers—the salary was only nominal, the company using a bonus system as a check on wasters and tropikitis cases—and "counter jumpers bossing spoiled niggers", the latter being the slippery negro gen'men culled from the Gold Coast missions to clerk in the barter stores.

All of which gave one to understand that he, Crawford, scorned to be a company hireling. Big things in the offing for big men. But as to what his business was he let drop no word, though the rasping contempt he had for the Burutu agent suggested a disappointment. Indeed, had he not been so contemptuous of the company's service, Mathers might have wondered if he had applied for the N'kassa agency and been turned down.

The man showed himself familiar with the situation at N'kassa.

"Hope you're in time for Whitcomb to make it a kick-out instead of a kick-in. He was in a bad way with blackwater. N'kassa's just a fever dump, anyway. No place for a green kid."

Continuing the disillusioning harangue, he warned Mathers to keep his eyes peeled on the N'kassa headman, one Fred Daku.

"A breed, kid," he said, and then dwelt on the sly mischief in breeds.

Four days of this, the Slit Noses swaying with the interminable rhythm of robots, the dugout snailing in and out of a maze of streams between spidery tangles of roots, and Crawford's voice rasping its destructive wiseings and uncanny "nigger stuff", were, without a doubt, largely responsible for the shivery confusion of Mathers's misadventure with the "juju sending" later on.

MATHERS had no inkling that he was a victim of the funkitis sport. He had no suspicion of drive and purpose on Crawford's part. Rather, he was sympathetic about the adversity which threw the ruffian on his charity for food and a lift. Of course, he longed to be free of the lectures and the belittling title of "kid". The constant necessity of jerking his gaze away when the left half of Crawford's thin face convulsed—for Crawford was as sensitive about it as if it had been a deformity—was annoying. Also, Mathers squirmed when the ruffian's glance roved over his guns, camera, rubber bath, grips—the romantic trappings of a kid adventurer in the eyes of the ruffian, no doubt. All these annoyances notwithstanding, Mathers offered the hospitality of the station.

When on the fourth sundown they beached at a cluster of conical huts on the bank, Crawford said it was the village of the Slit Noses where he hung his hat, or rather his dented sun helmet with bare patches of cork.

Mathers was loath to leave him there, dumped on black charity, he suspected. An incident deepened his objection. The chief, a mountain of black flesh in G-string and top hat, waddled down to the beach, grunted to Crawford, " 'Owdo", and shook hands.

Crawford tried to pass it off:

"His Nibs and I have blood-oath brotherhood. Pricked veins in our right arms, sprinkled salt on the blood clots and he licked mine, me his."

To Mathers's invitation to the station he said shortly he didn't hit it off with company men. He shooed Mathers off. At least, it amounted to that.

"Your station's the other side of this island. You back downstream to that last fork and go left." He added, "You'll have surly paddlers on your hands if you hold up their suppers this way."

Mathers carried away with him mingled feelings of chagrin and worry over a white living like a native almost in the shadow of the station. There was no wizard on hand to foretell—by observing the entrails of a black hen—that Crawford's presence on the island was to prove positively satanic.

The stars were thick over the dark jungle when Mathers reached the trading station, which was nothing to boast of—a couple of sheet iron sheds, huts for blacks, clay-and-thatch house for the agent—but satisfactory enough for a youngster's first charge, Crawford's jibes to the contrary.

A barrel shaped man waited for Mathers at the top of the bank, his wide figure in duck trousers and undershirt splitting a lane of light from a mosquito net over the doorless entrance to the agent's house. Mathers spotted him as the headman, or buyer, Fred Daku, whose hybrid name probably traced back to the early Portuguese who bartered trinkets and French dolls. Those ancient *joujous* are said to have originated the term juju, and certain it is the dolls are still to be found among the images of the juju groves.

Mathers made immediate inquiry after Agent Whitcomb. Daku, his voice strangely thin and high for one of his bulk, said that Mistah Whitcom' had been ver' seeck and had gone down to port. To Mathers it had the sound of bad news. It was all right for Whitcomb to leave—you can't monkey with blackwater fever—but Mathers had expected a few days going over stock, getting pointers on this and that, perhaps a line on Crawford; then a muster of the blacks, formal taking over—the company's flag dipped to the departing agent and all that satisfactory sort of thing.

Mathers started for the house with Daku at his side, followed by Johnny Jumps at the head of a procession of Slit Noses with Mathers's kit for headloads. Daku kept to the dark edge of the lane of light, the spaced noise of his sandals annotating a bass nocturne of bullfrogs. Not till they reached the net did Mathers see the man's face—a massive, yellowish face with dark eyes, as expressionless as an Oriental's.

The file of Slit Noses crowded together, then they slid past Mathers one by one, dumped their headloads just within the net and scurried back to the dugout and put off.

The sensible thing would have been to ask Daku in to get acquainted. But Crawford had cautioned, "Give a breed an inch and he'll take an ell. Keep him in his place, or he'll be walking in on you with his hat on and calling you by your first name." So Mathers coaxed an authoritative burr:

"That's all now, Daku. We'll go over things in the morning."

The man turned silently away. Mathers bent under a low thatch and entered his one-room house of clay walls and floor and clay-and-rafters ceiling, simply furnished with table, chair, a cane rocker, sideboard, a corner cot enclosed in a square of netting and a Dietz lantern on a chain over the table.

Having supped in the dugout, Mathers, tired from the long journey, gave himself to Johnny's valeting, which included a secreting of hairs from the massa's comb lest an enemy get hold of them and make bad magic against

the massa, then a tucking into bed. It was a literal tucking, for the hem of the net had to be tucked under the mattress all around to thwart prowling centipedes or tarantulas. That done, Johnny Jumps filled his lungs with air, bellowed his cheeks and expelled ineffectual blasts against the hurricane lantern till Mathers directed him from the bed to turn down the wick. Next Johnny spread his sleeping mat across the entrance net, and in a short time both were asleep.

IT SEEMED to Mathers he had been awakened by a bell. But the only sounds were the bass chorus of the bullfrogs and a drumming from the forest of an enraged baboon beating its fists on inflated chest; and in the house there was Johnny's chesty breathing. The room, white in the light of a late moon reflected from the white sands of the compound, showed nothing that could have given forth a bell sound. Yet a tiny tinkling, not unlike a cat's bell, was very definite.

Then Mathers detected a telltale catch in Johnny's breathing. The boy was shamming sleep. Moreover, he held his thumbs crooked at his sides. Crooked thumbs are the jinx-dispeller of all negroland. Johnny Jumps had heard the bell and was resorting to the West African's trick of playing 'possum in the presence of the occult.

While Mathers very sensibly refused to credit an occult origin, the idea of a cat's bell around a trading station in the heart of the jungle was in itself inexplicable enough to arouse a creepy curiosity. But though he stayed awake listening, and wondering if it had been in the house or compound, he did not hear the bell again that night.

In the morning he had Johnny on the carpet, or, to be literal, on a floor of hard clay.

"Johnny, what was that bell in the night?"

"Sah, I no savvy bell."

Taking that to mean the black did not know what a bell was, Mathers set out to explain, only to discover that a thing can be explained only by comparison with a like object known to the pupil. He was laboring with an absurd parallel, an iron drum with drumstick hung inside, when he recalled that Johnny's "good boy book"—the written character references blacks poke at whites as they debark at port—had the stamp of the Lokoja Mission. Johnny had answered mission and school bells; he knew all about bells.

"Johnny, why were your thumbs crooked in the night?"

"Sah—"

"Come, you're acting silly. You know you heard that bell."

"Sah, I no savvy."

"Johnny, you lie!"

"Sah," the boy whined, "I no fit to talk 'bout dat."

That settled it. Johnny had heard the tinkle and had taken it for a juju manifestation. Juju was not to be discussed with a white. Still, Mathers had one more question, for a suspicion popped into mind.

"Johnny, did the headman make that bell?"

The black hung his head sidewise, his limpid gaze lost at some point in the air between his eyes and the floor.

Mathers gave up. To the devil with spoofy tinkles! The sun was painting the tops of the mangroves, the muster drum had beaten, barter and bonus were in the air, and there was the overnight promise to go over things with Daku in the morning.

That promise was made to look silly. The work was simple and Daku placidly efficient at it. Now he was to be seen bartering over a canoeload of wild rubber in a dialect that left Mathers a mere spectator, now telling off blacks with machetes to cut back the encroaching jungle—one elemental job after another that offered Agent Mathers no excuse for interference. Though Mathers's inactive rôle seemed to prove that Daku would try to run things on his own, Mathers could not say Daku was wilful. Nevertheless, it left the young agent idle and prey to suspicions, to the end that when the burning sun crawled toward the western rim of the empty sky loneliness drove him to the only company possible—Crawford.

He ordered Daku to have a small canoe manned. It was his first order

to the headman. Daku complied without comment, rounding up a couple of paddlers and seeing personally to Mathers's departure; but he had nothing to say about it.

As Mathers neared the village of the Slit Noses he announced his approach by whistling a tune. He had something akin to a dread of surprising Crawford living native. His whistle drew the tall figure from the mat walled compound of the chief, who also waddled forth, his wide, ebony face wearing an avaricious grin, which faded at sight of Mathers's empty hands and gave place to a black scowl after a look into the canoe.

"No *dash*—present," he said in a rumbling growl. "No fit mak' me *dash. Urrghumph!*" He strutted angrily back to his compound.

"Kid—" Crawford grinned—"there goes your bonus dream. You've insulted his Nibs and lost the barter of the Slit Noses. Here, let me show you something."

His long strides led to a compound filled with neat piles of balls of crude rubber. Wild rubber was then West Africa's chief trade. The ivory trade was going the way of the slave trade, the Ivory and the Slave Coasts sinking to mere geographical epithets of trades that once were. The era of the exploitation of palm oil by the big soap companies had not dawned, nor had plantation rubber put wild rubber off a glutted market. Crawford explained that the rubber and other barter of the Slit Noses flowed through the head village, his Nibs commanding all barter privileges.

"And I," Crawford added meaningly, "have the say-so with his Nibs."

In other words, he was serving notice on Mathers that he controlled the barter there. That was sheer cheek. Mathers considered making peremptory claim to the rubber under a "sphere of influence" clause in the company's charter. But somehow his tongue tricked him into a weak protest—

"I say, y'know, that's company barter."

"Kid, you're not going to lug out that exclusive treaties stuff on an old-timer?" Crawford derided. "I'm trading this stuff to Hatton & Cooksie's factor at Old Calabar. I gave your Burutu agent a chance, but he couldn't see it my way."

The amazing thing to Mathers was that Crawford should be a piffling middleman in the piffling barter of a jungle king. And he had gone to Burutu to put the screws on the agent there. On account of a beggarly commission on the rubber? Hardly likely. There was something behind it. Mathers had a vague intuition of a bluff somewhere, but what the bluff might be he could not imagine.

CRAWFORD started back to the beach, Mathers accompanying, perforce, though he felt that he was being ushered away lest he see too close into Crawford's domestic arrangements, or the blood-oath friendship—or it may have been that Crawford did not want him to have the chance to set himself right with his Nibs over the fateful slip in the matter of the customary *dash.*

"Well, kid," the raucous voice twanged with far flung change of subject, "how're you making it with Fred Daku?"

"Oh, so-so," warily. "Daku's a bit dumb, but we'll make out all right."

"Dumb? Surly, sulky, you mean! Whitcomb let him get away with a notion he could run the station; and now you come along, a green sprig, and he's got to take orders. That breed hates his white bosses like poison. He sees them come and go—fever, booze, loneliness get them, or it's a kid crying homesick—while he stays on, doing the real work. There's a lot of nigger in Daku, and this idea that niggers look up to whites as superior creatures is bunk. His Nibs here told me all about it."

The raucous voice acquired a half whimsical note of recitation.

"In de beginning ob de worl' de Creator, all same white man's God, live fo' sky, called befo' Him de firs' black, what am de fader ob all de blacks, and de firs' white man. He put on de ground two calabashes. One dem calabashes done hab de Book of Knowledge, de oder calabash hab all de good t'ings ob de worl'—de oil palm, rubber, mahogany

forests, elephants, de ribber wid de fish. De God say firs' to de black man to choose. And dat fool black chose de calabash wid de good t'ings. De white man got de Book ob Knowledge, and what good de black hab de good t'ings when de Book gib de white man powerful magic all-same guns and fire canoes and he come and tak' de good t'ings ob de black man?"

Somehow Mathers liked the man better for the picture of him sitting with the king, say, after supper, under the eaves of thatch, the stars twinkling, the tomtoms throbbing the dance to the ancestral spirits, while they discussed the origin of things. Ruffians aren't interested in lore and legend. They spread corruption with square bottles of trade gin, crack the hippohide thong along the burning trails and swagger it off between times in the grogshops of Logos and Sierra Leone.

However, the telling of the fable was not a chance whim; it had been adroitly introduced to back up the assertion of Daku's contempt of his white bosses, and to lead up to more unpleasant advice.

"You'll have to watch your step with that breed or he'll be working nigger stuff on you. Spoofy things."

Mathers gave the lean face a suspicious glance.

"You'll go crazy trying to figure out what's happening to you," continued Crawford. "And don't fool yourself into thinking there's nothing to nigger stuff. I've seen strange things. Hellish things. I've often wondered if Whitcomb's sickness—well, watch your step with Daku."

Spoofy things? Was he referring to the bell? Had Mathers not been green to the jungle, he would have known that Johnny Jumps had held secret confab with the blacks of the station and that the juju bell had been a gossipy tidbit of the broadcasting talking drums. As it was, he reasoned that if Crawford knew of the trick—Mathers clung to "trick" in preference to "nigger stuff"—then Crawford must be considered as the possible trickster. Crawford or Daku? But why? Was it to scare him? But again, why?

The questions occupied Mathers's thoughts while returning to the station, along with a realization that he was completely ignorant of the jungle world and its strange denizens. He was a stranger in a haunted house whose every twist and turn was known to Crawford and, for that matter, to Daku. Rightly or wrongly, the ghostly bell took on the character of an act in some subtle plot. It was not a comfortable thought to take with him to bed—after swallowing two quinine pills for a fever temperature, his due inoculating attack of malaria.

Johnny Jumps took to his reed mat with necromantic measures against the occult—a red feather stuck through the fleshy lobes of his nose, guarding the black tunnels against *manu*, the disembodied human spirits roving around and looking for a chance to get back into life by stealing through the nose into a sleeping man's body while the sleeper's spirit is away on a dream journey, which is why men sometimes act strange and unlike their real selves. But *manu* won't cross red, which is the color of blood; and blood is life, so they are infuriated by this reminder of their expulsion from the flesh-and-blood world.

Nigger stuff. But to young Mathers, tossing in fever and striving to quiet a jumpy expectancy of the spoofy tinkle, Johnny's occult terrors got to be infectious. However, sleep came eventually. A long sleep, for when he awoke the late moon whitened the room.

THERE was no doubt about it this time; Mathers had been awakened by a tiny tinkling. He was even able to locate it in the space between the ceiling and the high thatch. Strangely, incredibly, the sound came now from a far corner, now right over the cot, then, unbelievably, it seemed to go out through the thatch and disappear in the night air.

Shaking off the creeps, he snatched the hem of the net from the mattress, thrust his feet into slippers, dashed out over Johnny Jumps's crooked thumbs and started on a run around the house, but took thought of a trickster keeping sly watch and dropped to a controlled walk.

What did he think to find? The lean faced Crawford, or the fat faced Daku, manipulating a string to a contrivance

in the attic. He found nothing. The two-acre compound was an empty square of moonlight walled in by forest.

He trailed back to bed. Tomorrow he would get to the bottom of the nonsense. He firmly said nonsense. Still, lying there wondering how a bell could float around, and what it was all about, and whether it was going to return every night—lying there hearing the telltale catch in Johnny's breathing, looking at the crooked thumbs—was uncomfortably creepy.

Before he knew it his thoughts were drifting toward "nigger stuff", then creeping around a gruesome "sending" recorded in Mary Kingsley's "West Africa" under the heading: "The Thrown Face Of The Fantee". When a Fantee black has a violent quarrel he will *throw his face* on his enemy. The cursed one begins to see the face all the time, everywhere, in places a face has no right to be—up among the rafters of his hut, and he can not sleep; in his supper pot, and he loses appetite; in the bush by the trail, and he takes to secret ways, giving out that he is going to take a certain trail, then taking another.

But he can not escape the face. It is in the water when he is about to spear a fish, and he misses his aim; or over the prow of his canoe, or in a clump of plantains. He can not escape it. He gives up. He sits under the eaves of his hut, bows his head down between his knees for hours and hours. At last in utter despair he seeks the only escape—suicide. When the curser hears that he laughs, for the face will haunt the suicide in Abambo, the spirit world which is an astral counterpart of the natural world even to its hatreds.

Well, the thrown face was no great puzzler. The victim is told by the curser the face will haunt him and, believing in it, he becomes prey to an apparition of his frightened imagination. But no one had put the idea of the bell in Mathers's head. It was not a case of horrifying suggestion, but attested to by physical hearing. It was an actuality. It had meaning, purpose. The purpose had to be uncovered. Something had to be done about the bell, for if that tinkle returned night after night . . .

Something had to be done. What? That was Mathers's problem as he sipped his coffee at daybreak. His fever temperature had abated, as is the way with the come-night-go-morning fever of a first attack of malaria. A practical way of exorcising the ghostly bell was suggested by a chance trifle. A young python poked an inquisitive head through a ceiling hole where the clay had dropped away from a rafter.

Mathers sought Daku, who was easily found. His bulky figure in undershirt and ducks, the massive face shadowed by a shallow helmet, dominated the short vista of compound, narrow reach of dead water and walling forest. Daku was telling off the muster when Mathers came up to him.

"Daku, I want the house rethatched." He might have left it at that, the order of the agent to his headman; but, flustered by the imponderability of the man, he weakly added the reason. "There are snakes in the thatch—come after rats, most likely."

Daku demurred that the blacks could ill be spared. There were some mahogany logs to be brought in. They lay in the mud of one of the streams, splitting in the sun. Too, Mr. Whitcomb had rethatched just before he left.

To insist, in the face of two such sound objections, would lay Mathers open to conjecture of the true reason for the rethatching, to the inward smirking of Daku, if he happened to be the trickster.

"Very well, Daku. After the mahogany is brought in. But have that hole in the ceiling plugged."

"Yes, sir."

Nothing to quarrel with there—no disrespect, no insubordination. Yet Mathers felt as if Daku had won a bout. A savage humiliation swept him. He carried around a headman complex all through that empty day. Idleness and worry. Sundown saw a return of the fever. He doubled the dose of quinine and took to a sweat under blankets.

DRY, burning ache in his bones, retching stomach, hollow head. Snatches of sleep between periods of semi-delirium; a ghastly face; crooked thumbs and red feather; a prison warder walk-

ing somewhere in sandals that went *plop-plop;* a raucous voice and grimacing face; a black king in a top hat shouting angrily about a *dash.* All mixed nightmarishly with a tinkling bell and balls of rubber, and a tall, lean, satanic figure that croaked:

"Ha-ha! You forgot the *dash.* You've lost your bonus chance. Ha-ha!"

Some one was talking in the room—right by the bed. Twisting his head on the pillow, Mathers saw through the net the wide face of Daku. He was talking to Johnny Jumps, but the sense of the words was lost to Mathers in a half-delirious rage. He jerked up from the hips, to shout the man from the house.

Daku turned at the creaking of the cot. With no further ado the huge black raised the net, placed a hand against Mathers's chest, bore him down effortlessly; then he put a reed between his own lips, pinched Mathers's nose between thumb and forefinger, as a nurse dosing a medicine-shy patient, put the other end of the quill in Mathers's gasping mouth and blew down his throat stinging, hot cayenne. He pulled the blankets to the victim's chin and tied the corners to the cot frame.

Choking, blinded, burning, helpless, humiliated and scared, Mathers had just enough mental clarity to realize that he was helpless. Eventually he lapsed into a sleep of exhaustion.

When again he awoke the door net showed a square of gray dawn. Daku was still there, talking in a sort of comforting croon to Johnny, whose anxious face was pressed against the net at the foot of the bed. Mathers was about to curse the man from the house, when he caught the sense of the croon.

"Doan' you worry, nigger. The firs' fevah ain't so mooch. Mistah Mathers sweat fine. Nothing like red pepper to make a man sweat. You go tell cook to kill chicken. Feex strong broth for Mistah Mathers."

Mathers closed his eyes to think. The solicitous concern of the headman gave him an entirely different perspective. Mathers rolled his head, opened his eyes and took a long look at the heavy face, seeing it now for what it was, not masked in guile, but stodgy. He saw back along the trail to his arrival; saw the headman respectfully accompanying him to the house, with a proper distance between himself and the agent, speaking only when spoken to. A bit dumb, perhaps, but going about his simple work with a placid efficiency.

"Daku—" there was a catch in his voice—"you'll find a bottle of Scotch in the sideboard. Johnny, bring a glass."

Daku did not understand he was being invited to take a drink; he brought the bottle to the bed.

"No," said Mathers; then, "Oh, well, make it two glasses, Johnny. I don't drink in the morning, but this is—a celebration."

He debated asking Daku if he had heard the bell in his night-long vigil by the bed, but decided to wait a bit, to try out the new understanding and see how it worked out. He was a bit shy about exposing his concern over the bell. Too, eliminating its "nigger stuff" origin, if Daku was not the trickster, the inquiry might uncover Crawford in that rôle; and race loyalty made Mathers squeamish about discussing Crawford with Daku.

So, notwithstanding a morning that brought about an agent-and-headman harmony most promising to bonus hopes, the bell was not mentioned, and Crawford only incidentally when Mathers spoke of the rubber in the village of the Slit Noses. Daku did not seem to think that so important.

"Mistah Whitcom' say Mistah Crawford ees one big bluff and to leave him alone."

That decided Mathers to visit the chief, this time with *dash,* and put to the test Crawford's vaunted control over the rubber. He took the canoe at cool of evening, Daku having chosen the royal largess—a jar of cheap pomade, two hands of leaf tobacco, a small mirror and some salt.

As luck had it, the *dash* combined with a fateful chance which caught Crawford in a situation ruinous to his pride. Crawford was huddled over a pot of palm oil chop in the chief's courtyard, fishing with his Nibs for choice bits of chicken and yam, which he lifted to his mouth dripping palm oil. Some fuss or other had blown across the ami-

ability of the blood-oath brotherhood. Bits of pidgin English which his Nibs mixed with a rumble of dialect may have been the clue to the trouble.

"No fit let you hab rubbah. Make look-see de company. Many, many moons gone by make book—treaty—wid de company."

The king was serving Crawford notice he intended doing barter with the company. And here, opportunely, was the company's agent, with full hands. The chief's scowl gave place to a smirk. Crawford recognized fate, or perhaps he was tired of it all. He got up, jerked a nod at the *dash,* and—

"You're catching on—agent."

There was no facetiousness in the title, yet it made Mathers remember that hitherto Crawford had called him "kid". "Agent" had a flavor of surrender, the humility of the beaten.

"I'm fired here."

Crawford tried to grin, but his sympathetic nerve tricked him into the half-face grimace.

"Give his Nibs his *dash,* then we'll be free to walk and talk," he said, with true prophecy; for the moment the chief got the *dash* in his hands his mental and emotional orbits were confined to the gifts.

Walking with Mathers from the yard, Crawford threw out with mirthless laughter:

"I'm free to hunt a new job. Maybe the village needs an official ratcatcher. If Whitcomb's trick was successful in ridding the thatch of its rats, you might pass along that wire cage he used for a trap and the bottle of chloroform and cat's bell."

* * *

"OF COURSE," said Mathers, telling his story in the smokeroom, "he didn't mean the ratcatcher stuff literally. It was the forced laughter of his weariness, and a tip-off of the spoofy bell. Oh, sure, he knew all about it. But what flabbergasted me was his hinting at a job.

"Lordy, since then I've played host to many of his ilk—chaps like Smith here, trying to fool himself that the ivory game isn't played out; that one of these days a lucky *dash* of squareface gin will loosen the tongue of a chief about an ivory cache. At heart these palm oil ruffians are envious of a lieutenant's regular pay and the pension ahead, so they give him the funkitis works.

"I've played host to scores of 'em. They sat under my punkah and talked of Munchi kings who danced to honor them, or it was a Yergum chief who went down on all fours and put dirt on his wool, or a sultan up in Bornu willing to trade treasure for smuggled guns.

"They all affected pity of my stay-on-the-spot job, but were hard put to it to hide their ravenous hunger. Lonely men whose empty lives give an egotistical importance to trifling happenings. Trader Horns! I'll wager that when Ethelreda Lewis tickled the conceit of that old backdoor handout, Aloysius Smith, and lured him into his egotistical romancings she thought she was handing the world a laugh.

"These funkitis sporters, trying to get even for the goading of their failure by youth's cheery optimism! Dick Crawford stealing a ride in the canoe of the green sprig who was given the agency he had been to Burutu to get for himself! He hadn't gone about it the right way with the Burutu chap. Pride made him swagger. He tried to run a bluff—claimed he controlled the barter around N'kassa.

"Oh, sure, he finally came on the company's payroll. A good man at that. Swapped uncertain tomorrows, leg weariness, the centipedes and scorpions of the huts-of-the-strangers, the three-fingering with blacks in pots of mealies, the touch-and-go between friendly palaver and irrational fury, the will-o'-wisp fortune chasing—exchanged them all for punkah, chop table, mosquito net, the whisky bottle on the sideboard, blessed routine and bonus—something for old age.

"The bell?

"Why, Whitcomb had caught a rat in a cage trap, chloroformed it, then strung a cat's bell to its neck, revived it and let it run in the attic. The theory is, the rat will go mad from hearing the tinkle all the time, everywhere it goes, as inescapable as the thrown face. Its madness will scare away the other rats, and would have rid the thatch of the snakes as well.

"Nigger stuff!"

By R V. GERY

FIVE HUNDRED *In Gold*

CAPTAIN DINGWALL of the *Claymore,* a large, florid faced man, entered the saloon a few minutes late for the midday meal, a bundle under his arm.

"Mail, gentlemen," he announced, hacking through the string with a blunt table knife.

The ship's officers, already eating, laid down their cutlery, and the skipper sorted over the heap of correspondence before him.

"Papers for you, Mr. Majendie," he observed to the engineer, tossing him half a dozen wrapped periodicals. "Usual, I suppose—"

"Aye," said Majendie laconically. "E'en the usual, as ye say, Captain. The *U. P. Sentinel,* that michty wrastler wi' the deevil an' his works. There's a series runnin' the noo, Captain Dingwall, on hell an' who'll go there—a verra sprightly bit o' prognostication. Ye should read it, sirr. 'Twad int'rest ye!"

He fixed the skipper with a meaningful and fishy eye, but Captain Dingwall did not choose to rise to the lure.

"No, thanks," he said stiffly. "Keep your reach-me-down kirk to yourself, Mr. Engineer. Mr. Slade, here's yours. Bills, by the look of 'em. No wonder you went to sea, Mr. Slade. Handy way of cheating creditors, eh?"

Slade, the first mate, scowled. He was new to the *Claymore,* and six weeks of Dingwall had already caused him to rue the day he had set foot on her.

"Letter for Mr. Cripps," called the skipper, holding it up by the thumb and finger of each hand and inspecting it with his head cocked on one side. "Lady, too. Mr. Cripps, what's all this? Too young for this sort of thing, Mr. Cripps. By rights I ought to have a look at it. However, I suppose you'd better take it."

He flipped the letter to Cripps, the Second, a fair young man with prominent blue eyes and a pugnacious jaw, and went on with his bullying comments on the correspondence of the other officers. Captain Dingwall was a magnificent seaman, it was admitted by all

hands; but his manners were as freely allowed to be those of an unenlightened hog, and Mr. Majendie's pious hint as to the reading that might be suitable for him only reflected an opinion pretty generally held on the *Claymore*.

Cripps ripped open his letter impatiently, to the sound of rustling from the engineer and the slitting of envelops around the table. He ran his eye over the scrawled feminine handwriting, gulped, reread it and turned a slow crimson. Then he swore, once and irresistibly, thereby drawing Captain Dingwall's attention to him again.

"What's the matter, Mr. Cripps?" the master demanded with feigned concern. "Not chucked you, has she?"

As this was precisely what the young woman had done, and in no very tactful manner, Cripps's scarlet deepened. Dingwall laughed.

"Oho! That's it, eh? Mr. Cripps's fancy's turned him down, gentlemen, the poor chap. Never you mind, Mr. Cripps—never you mind. Just as well out of it, I daresay. Not that I blame her much. Oh, no!"

The biting sarcasm told, and Cripps was jerked out of his not excessive self-control.

"You go to blazes!" he snarled at Dingwall. "Keep your dirty tongue off me, sir!"

There was a sudden silence and a general raising of eyes around the saloon. This was something out of the ordinary on the *Claymore;* very much out of the ordinary. Captain Dingwall was nobody to cross on his own ship.

He stopped eating and laid down his knife and fork.

"What's that?" he inquired. "Say that again, you!"

Cripps, desperate with fury, said it again, with a few adhesive additions.

"Very good!" Dingwall's normal blatancy turned to a cold and dangerous deliberation. "I'll remember that, Mr. Cripps. I'm not going to take any action now, because the saloon's the saloon, and a joke's a joke, though you don't seem to agree. But there aren't many jumped-up jackanapes that've spoken to me that way and heard the last of it. Just you watch yourself, Mr. Cripps, for I'll get you yet!"

He fixed a granite eye on the Second, and then let it roam around the table, as if daring any one to meet it. Majendie alone did.

"Ah, noo, noo, Captain—" he was beginning pacifically, when Dingwall, as if he had been waiting for him, cut him short.

"And you shut your face, Mr. Engineer!" he said. "It's no concern of yours. Damme, have I got to sit here and be sauced by a greasy mechanic as well as a wet nosed pup? I'm master here, gentlemen, and don't you ever forget it!"

Majendie rose heavily.

"Aweel, Captain," he said with resignation, "I'll e'en leave ye wi' the honors o' the field. I'm a peaceable man, an' no inclined for to be involved in ony frackass aboard here. Ye'll be feelin' a little better by the evenin', no doubt. It'll be the sun, I'm thinkin'—"

And with this final shot he passed out of the saloon, leaving Dingwall glaring after him.

Cripps also beat a retreat and went to his cabin; he was in a state when he felt that words were unsafe.

HE STARED out of the porthole at San Tomas, that sun blistered South American port whose harbor the *Claymore* had entered that morning. It lay in its crater bay, glittering squalidly along the shore, and backed by an enormous panorama of brown mountain. Cripps knew it of old, as it was one of the *Claymore's* regular ports of call. A roystering, tempestuous place, he recollected; and as he looked at it, it occurred to him that there were certain well known antidotes to the poison of unrequited affection, and that they might be found at San Tomas in luxuriant plenty. An afternoon ashore was clearly indicated.

Slipping into his best uniform, he went on deck, hailing a shore boat propelled by a dusky person in a straw sombrero. As he took his seat there was a hail from the top of the ladder, and Majendie's hatchet face appeared.

"Wait a wee, Mr. Cripps," he said. "I'm wi' ye." He descended, also in his shore-going clothes—a much crumpled suit of mercantile blue. "An' how goes

it wi' ye, laddie?" he asked, casting a friendly glance at the mate. "Better, eh? Weel, I'll no inflict ma sympathy on ye—maybe when ye've had the traffickin's wi' the sex I have ye'll no take things so hard."

Cripps flushed once more.

"'Tisn't that," he said. "I daresay you're right about the girl. It's that swine Dingwall—"

"Tckh!" Majendie clucked. "Surely ye're no frettin' over what yon blatherumskite said to ye? I'd thought ye'd a thicker skin."

"Thicker skin!" Cripps fumed. "You heard what he said to me? How'd you like it if he tried that lay on you?"

Majendie considered this proposition, rubbing his chin.

"Eh!" he said at last. "I'm no so sure, at that. I'm a man of peace, as ye heard me tellin' Dingwall; but if it'd been me, Muster Cripps—mind, I'm no puttin' this oot as advice, or incitin' ye to anything extraordinar'—I misdoubt but I'd have had his life. 'Deed, aye!"

Cripps regarded him with increasing approval.

"Glad to hear it," he said. "That's pretty much the way I've been thinking, too. Get me, will he?" He frowned darkly. "He'd better watch out, or I'll get him!"

"Noo, noo, not so much of it," Majendie advised. "Ye'll be workin' yourself into a sweat, Muster Cripps, an' Lord kens it's hot eneuch as it is in this condemned hole. Just ye tak' a grip, an' bide your time—maybe ye'll find the chance come to ye yet. But here's the beach. Will ye favor me wi' your company awhile? It's slow work, drinkin' alone—"

Together they approached the Hotel de la Reina, the hostelry most in repute among the ship's officers visiting San Tomas. Majendie strode into the bar as if on familiar ground, nodded to the proprietor, a gloomy individual with a tragic mustache, and ordered whisky.

"The bottle, mind ye," said he. "None o' your tots!"

He and Cripps sat at an iron table under the tattered awning, and the mate began to feel after awhile that love was after all a disease that admitted of a cure. The bottle diminished, after the fashion of its kind, and another appeared at a flick of Majendie's finger. Cripps began to experience a sense of warm well being, and at the same time a recrudescence of his animus against Dingwall.

"I'd like to get my hooks on that perisher!" he said to the world in general. "Damn pompous old lard bladder!"

Majendie ignited a poisonous looking yellow cigar.

"He-er, he-er!" he said admiringly. "Lay on, Mac—I disremember exactly which o' the Macs it was, but the sentiment's a guid yin. Losh!" He peered suddenly under his hand across the water. "If yon's no the verra man comin' ashore noo! Tak' a glint at him, for pity's sake—"

It was indeed Captain Dingwall, big, rubicund and immaculately turned out, who occupied the stern sheets of the *Claymore's* dinghy. He landed at the steps, ran lightly up them and stood for a moment at the top, looking about him. Majendie regarded him sourly.

"D'ye ken where he's goin?" he asked Cripps.

The mate expressed a fervent hope that his enemy was on his way to a place even hotter than San Tomas.

"Na, na," the engineer chuckled. "No just yet. Yon's no doubt his ultimate destination, as maybe ye heard me hint wi' delicacy at dinner. But that's a dispensation reserved, as ye mich say, a wee whilie. Na, our worthy skipper's dinin' in state wi' the governor here tonight—he was soundin' off to me about it all this mornin'."

He glowered at the waiting Dingwall; then he gave vent to a grunt of mingled surprise and amusement as a new portent appeared on the quay.

It was an equipage—a species of victoria—drawn by a couple of gaily caparisoned mules, and with a portly black coachman on the box. In it, under a frilled canopy and sitting bolt upright on the cushions, was a shred of a little man, with a dried up monkey face. He was in the fullest of full uniforms. A peaked cap, adorned with a plastering of gold lace, was perched on his head, a long saber dangled at his side, and he wore six-inch gilt spurs.

Majendie grunted again at sight of

him and nudged Mr. Cripps.

"Yon's the laddie," he said. "Yon's the governor. Watch Dingwall, noo!"

THE captain approached the carriage with an impressive salute, returned by the functionary with much dignity. There was a moment's conversation, marked by a great deal of jerky bowing on the part of the don, and further saluting from Dingwall; then the *Claymore's* commander entered the vehicle, pride exuding from every inch of his square shoulders and thick neck, and the pair were driven off.

"There!" Majendie commented. "See what it is to be a ship's captain, Muster Cripps, an' move in high society. Dingwall's in clover, for yon wee blastie's weel known for the table he keeps. Ye'll see—our freen'll be aboard at midnight, full o' vainglory an' mixed drinks!"

"What's he get asked out like this for? He's only a two-penny shipmaster."

Things were beginning to appear to Cripps as if surrounded by an odd shimmering haze, in the midst of which flickered a gigantic Dingwall.

"Dinna ask me, laddie. It's no for the fascinatin' manners of him, onyway. If I'd to make a guess I'd say 'twas somethin' crooked. There's plenty o' siccan whigmaleeries hereabouts, ye'll be aware—"

"What did you say the little runt's name was?"

"Man, d'ye think I carry a mouthful o' polysyllables like thot about wi' me? Ask Ferguson here. Hey—" to the hotel keeper—"Ferg'son, or whatever it is ye call yourself, whit's the name o' the wee felly in the carriage?"

The innkeeper had been watching the victoria's progress with a scowl.

"*El gobernador,*" he said sulkily. "Don Ramon Ignacio Guiterrez de Avilar."

He spat with intention, and Majendie looked at him owlishly.

"Eh?" he said. "Ye dinna seem to have ony verra cordial likin' for the body, Ferg'son ma dearie!"

Just how much of this the landlord understood is doubtful, but his gloom increased, and he growled out some unpleasantness in Spanish, incomprehensible either to Majendie or the bemused Cripps. Clearly Governor de Avilar stood in no very high favor with him.

"Weel," said the engineer, pouring himself another generous helping from the bottle, "I dinna just ken what yon few remarks signified, ma guid mon, but on general principles I'm with ye. Doon wi' the aristocracy's been ma motto ever since I was a wee laddie by the Clyde. An' I'll request ye, Muster Cripps, for to join wi' Ferg'son an' maself in a toast—so fill up your glass man, an' nae heeltaps. Noo then—" he got to his feet with a stagger and bellowed at the top of a foghorn voice—"tak' the time from me, gents: One, two, three, an' to hell wi' the governor!"

There was a hush on the quay as he collapsed into his chair, wiping his brow. People within range of his raucous voice started and looked round, grinning at the outburst; but beyond a couple of deckhands from an American tanker, sitting across the street, there did not seem to be any one to whom his impassioned Scots conveyed a thing. Sleep appeared to overtake him on a sudden and he nodded slumberously, while Cripps betook himself to trying to count the number of masts there were on a coasting vessel in the bay. After a number of attempts he came to the conclusion that she represented a new type in sailing vessels—a nine, or was it eleven, master—and he was just on the point of digging the engineer in the ribs and making him a party to this surprising discovery, when a dark little man slipped into a chair at his side.

"*'Noches, caballeros!*" he said, removing his broad hat with a flourish.

Majendie opened his eyes and blinked at him.

"Guid e'en t'ye!" he said doubtfully. "I dinna think I've the pleasure of your acquaintance, but will we tak' a dram?"

The man smiled.

"I introduce myself, señors," he said with formality. "Miguel Ruiz, at your honors' service."

"Weel, Muster Rooz," said Majendie, "pleased to meet ye, I'm sure. An' whut may be your wull wi' us?"

The man cocked his head on one side and shot a look of deepest cunning at

Majendie.

"Money, señors," he said succinctly. "Money—for you."

Mr. Majendie sat up straight in his chair.

"Verra weel spoken, Muster Rooz," he said with enthusiasm. "Ye interest me strangely. Proceed!"

Ruiz turned on the landlord, who was attentively looking on, and gave an order. In a moment three magnums of champagne were on the table before them, and Ruiz was manipulating wires and corks.

"You will honor me, señors?" he asked.

"Aweel," said Majendie as the golden stuff bubbled into his glass, "I'm no so verra partial as a rule to these meeneral watters—however, here's luck!" He quaffed deeply. "An, noo, Muster Rooz," he went on, wiping his lips, "let's come to the point. Money, I b'lieve, I heard ye mention—"

The newcomer coughed.

"Señor," he said in an undertone, "there was a toast I heard you drink—"

"Toast?" Majendie stared brassily at him. "Ah, I rec'lect. 'Twas wishin' the governor a Merry Christmas, or some such, was it no?"

"The governor—yes," said Ruiz. "But that was not what you said, señor."

"No?" Majendie's tone was innocent. "Aweel, I'm just forgettin' what 'twas, this moment. Onyway—" he suddenly fixed a concentrated gaze on Ruiz—"to the de'il wi' him! You too, if ye like!" he added belligerently.

Ruiz regarded him for a long minute. Then he seemed to make up his mind.

"Listen," he said. "You do not love him—this De Avilar, eh?"

"Why," said Majendie, "no—not that ye'd notice it. Why d'ye ask?"

"You would wish the chance of—how do you say?—spoke his wheel, eh? For a reward?"

"How much?"

"That arranges itself, señors." Their interlocutor waved light hands. "Fifty—a hundred—two hundred pounds, English?"

"Five hundred!" said Majendie instantly.

Ruiz dropped this aspect of the subject and switched to another.

"Señors," he said, "you are acquaint with the Captain Dingwall, no?"

CRIPPS, upon whom the champagne had had the astonishing effect of transforming the schooner into a square rigged vessel with nineteen masts, suddenly swung about.

"Dingwall?" he demanded. "Worr-aboutim? Man's a con-cons'crated baboon!"

Ruiz beamed approvingly.

"Beyond doubt, señor," he said. "But let us get to business."

"Aye—business, young man," said Majendie. "Let's have it. What's in the wind?"

Ruiz glanced about him with elaborate caution, moistening his lips. Then he let a single word slip hissing out of the corner of his mouth—

"R-r-revolution!"

Majendie took another gulp of champagne to cover his surprise.

"Ye dinna say!" he murmured.

"Señors," said Ruiz, "I admit you to our councils. The revolution, she is prepare. The troops, she are ready. The governor—poof!—he goes to be fusil-laded, shot! Everything it is cut and dry—but the arms, alas, señors, they are not!"

"Thot's verra sad," sympathized Majendie. "But what's it to us?"

"The Captain Dingwall," Ruiz went on eloquently, "dines with the governor tonight. You knew? *Buen!* There is arranged there the transportation of arms—much arms, machine gun, *grenados,* everything—for the assist of this De Avilar and his government. It is known, this. It must be stop. We—" he slapped his chest—"import also, but secretly, little by little. A month, yes, and we are ready in truth. But—" he shrugged—"if this *capitan* brings a shipful—"

"Ah!" said Majendie. "Exoctly! Sugars up the whole jing-bang for ye, o' course. But what is it ye want us to do?"

"But it is of a simpleness, señors," said Ruiz. "Prevent Captain Dingwall to bring the arms!"

Majendie rolled a bloodshot eye at him.

"Mon, ye're not askin' much!" he ejaculated. "Cripps, d'ye hear that? Oor freen' here's askin' us to step up an' put a crimp in the wee deal Dingwall an' the governor 've got in hand up yonder."

Cripps shifted his fascinated gaze from the harbor.

"All ri'!" he said dreamily. "Let's do it!"

"Mon—" Majendie began, and then stopped. For an appreciable time he hesitated, while the little man toyed with the stem of his wineglass, and the slow shadows deepened on the hills. "An' how d'ye suggest it's to be done?" he asked at length.

Ruiz shrugged.

"Remove him," he said easily. "He must be keep from the governor—one, maybe two weeks. Then he is release, and all is well—"

"Release! An' me an' Cripps here's to be doin' jailer on him all that while? Mon, ye're mad!"

"No, no, señor. For that time we guard him—we, the revolutionists. Listen and you shall see. You will seize this *capitan*—at dinner if you will, but no matter how; that is your affair. You hand him to us, eh? We have a house where he will live well, until our arrangements are complete. The police—pooh, they do not find him. Your vessel, it sail away. And the governor, he must find, is it not, another *capitan* so willing as the Señor Dingwell. He will not, eh? Then at the end, the *capitan* he is freed, the revolution she is complete, and all is well!"

"Well!" Majendie echoed. "An' what d'ye think Dingwall'd do? Take the first train down the coast to catch the *Claymore,* an' we'd be in irons—Cripps an' me—before he'd been aboard two minutes. Well, d'ye say? Ye've odd ideas, Mr. Rooz!"

The little man broke once more into his gentle smile.

"Wait, señors," he begged. "It is easy. Hear now. You and your so-obliging friend are known to the *capitan.* He sees you here, drinking—pardon—on the quay. You visit the house of the governor this evening; you are, let us say, drunk. Noisy, shouting, you comprehend . . ."

Majendie nodded, then frowned.

"Go on!" he said.

"You seize this *capitan*—remove him, yes. You will, you say, take him to the ship, to the town, anywhere, for the uproariment. You are the good comrades, eh, a little—how is it?—*illuminados,* lit up. The *capitan,* he resist, perhaps—the governor, he protest; but you, you are very drunk, eh, and merry. You take the Señor Dingwall away; and on the road, at a place I show you, you are attack. It is us and, you comprehend, we do not attack so very strong. The Señor Dingwall is vanish—"

A slow grin had begun to irradiate Majendie's countenance.

"Mphm!" he said. "I see. An' then we go runnin' to the police—"

"Of a surety, señor. But the police, pooh! they do not find him. And you with your so charming friend return to your ship with two hundred English pounds."

"Five—"

"Five, then," Ruiz capitulated.

"But see here," said Majendie. "There's just one thing I dinna understand. For why do ye no commit this rovishment on Dingwall ye ainselves?"

Patiently Ruiz explained. The governor knew them all, he said, and the risk of identification was great. Moreover, there was the question of international complications, and his party did not want those at all just at present. No, here was the way the matter should be carried out, if the señors would consider it . . .

Majendie looked across at Cripps.

"What d'ye think?" he said.

The mate had been crooning a wordless song to himself; he interrupted it to nod with great solemnity at Majendie.

"Let'sh go!" he said. "Anything to get Dingwall!"

Majendie rose, a shade unsteadily.

"Weel, Muster Rooz," he said, "we're the billies for ye. An' noo, just to show there's no ill feelin', we'll e'en tak' a look at the color o' your money!"

Somewhat to his surprise, Ruiz made no demur.

"Follow me, señors," he said. "Not too close—the police are fools, but it is well not to give them any opportunities."

He went off down the street, walking nonchalantly through the evening. Majendie, after awhile, hauled Cripps to his feet and followed.

RUIZ led the way up an alley between tall white walls. Halfway along it was a gate through which he vanished; it closed behind him, but reopened as Majendie and Cripps approached it. There was a furtive atmosphere about the place, the engineer decided, well in keeping with the work at hand. Ruiz was standing just inside; he led the way into a shuttered house.

To all seeming the place was empty, and in the half light a tall safe in one corner of the room took on a more than usually mysterious aspect. Ruiz produced a key and opened it, taking out a large leather bag.

"Does this satisfy the *caballeros?*" he asked, drawing from it roll after roll of coins. Majendie ripped the cover off one and his eyes glistened.

"The Lord save us!" he said, handing them to Cripps after a glance. "English sovereigns! I've no seen the like in twenty year."

"A rarity, señor," Ruiz agreed. "But we find them useful."

"Weel," Majendie said, "yon's a sight for sair een, I'm willin' to admit. Noo, Muster Rooz, five hunner o' these, an' Dingwall's yours!"

"Excellent!" Ruiz counted out rolls into a smaller bag. "Naturally, we give you this when the *captain* is in our hands. It is agreed, eh?"

"If ye say so, it'll have to be so, I suppose," Majendie said reluctantly. "But, mon, ye're no a verra trustin' body!"

The Spaniard smiled imperturbably and went on with his counting. Then he reached into the safe once more and produced a black bottle and a couple of glasses.

"It is a little early yet, *amigos,*" he said. "There is maybe a half hour. You will not refuse a little refreshment, eh?"

"Ye've a persuasive manner wi' ye, Muster Rooz," said Majendie. "Whut's this ye're offerin' us?"

"Aguardiente," said Ruiz. "Not so delicate as champagne, no — but not without its merits."

The merits of the fluid which the engineer and mate were presently discussing appeared to include a mule-like kick and swift action. In less than ten minutes Majendie was conscious that his own seasoned head was being definitely assailed; and Cripps, starting at a disadvantage, was well on into the pugnacious and noisy stage suggested by Ruiz.

"Show me Dingwall!" he vociferated. "Thatsh the man that readsh my letters! Lemme at him—tha's all!"

Majendie took the bag from Ruiz and jingled it, listening to its comfortable clink.

"Eh-h!" he said. "Yon's a soothin' sound, gentlemen! An' when I think o' Captain Dingwall—"

He broke off, with a ruminative and malevolent grin. Darkness fell, and for some time there was no sound in the room. Then Ruiz got up.

"Come!" he said. "I show you the place."

After a little difficulty in getting Majendie to give up the bag, and still more in keeping Cripps even approximately quiet, the three set off out of the gate in the wall and made toward the outskirts of the town. Ten minutes' walk brought them to a large building set far back in a garden on the hillside. Ruiz pointed at it.

"It is there," he said. "And when you have what you seek, señors, you find me here with the gold. It is understood, eh?"

"But there'll be others with ye," Majendie said. "Dingwall'll fight like a hornet!"

"Rest easy!" Ruiz laughed. "There are fifty within call at this moment."

He faded into the shadows with the bag, and Majendie peered at the house, gripping the mate by the arm.

"Noo, Muster Cripps," he said, "forward wi' ye, laddie—an' remember it's our worthy master we're after!"

He led the by now murderously enthusiastic mate up the carriage drive. Fifty yards from the door he halted, and from one sagging hip pocket produced a quart flask, and from the other a small but formidable slingshot. He took a prolonged draft from the flask and handed it to Cripps.

"Finish thot!" he said. "If we're

goin' to act the pair o' drunken laddies, we micht as weel do it properly!"

The assault upon the governor's mansion went, in its initial stages, with a considerable bang. It was begun by Cripps, upon whose load of alcoholic explosives the final slug of neat spirits appeared to act as a detonator. He flung the flask from him, burst into an electrifying series of yells, and made a dash for the door. Majendie followed hard at his heels, waking the echoes with eldritch hoots and shrieks, flourishing the slingshot about his head the while.

The lower story of the long white house was in darkness, save for the lighted doorway. The two plunged straight for this alley of brightness; and as they did so a man ran from it, spitting oaths in Spanish and tugging at what was apparently an armpit holster. He was a menacing looking person, and the crack which Majendie bestowed upon his skull was justifiable if only on grounds of precaution.

"Hutt!" The engineer was beginning to enjoy himself. "Come on wi' ye, Cripps laddie!"

The hall light made them blink for a moment and they stopped. Beyond a faint murmur of voices from behind a closed door at the end, the place seemed deserted and strangely silent. Majendie glared about him.

"Whut's all this?" he muttered.

Cripps blundered into and knocked over a pedestal with a marble statuette of Venus. The crash roused him once more, and he emitted a further series of yells. Stooping, he picked up the Venus, and with it as a club began to batter on the door.

THE voices stopped abruptly. There was a sudden loud shout of, "Look out!" from within—the tones were unmistakably Dingwall's—and simultaneously came the sharp crack of a pistol. A bullet whacked splintering through the panels, missed Cripps's cheek by an inch, and brought a square of glass tinkling down from the hall window.

With one accord the two men flung themselves forward at the door. It flew from its hinges and they were precipitated into the room.

It was a long one, and down at the far end of it there was a spectacle that made even the engineer pause. Governor De Avilar and Captain Dingwall, before a table with writing materials on it, were engaged in what seemed to be a life and death struggle. De Avilar, his small features livid, had an automatic and was doing his best to use it, while Dingwall, a hand on his wrist, sought to wrench it from him. The governor twisted and squirmed with an agility surprising in one of his insignificance; and as Majendie gaped at them he tore his hand free and squibbed off another shot.

The engineer bellowed bull-fashion, a chip out of the lobe of one ear. Then he leaped up, prepared to bring his weapon into play; but as he did so the marble Venus, hurled by Cripps, flew through the air and took De Avilar on the head with a thump that must have been audible outside the house. The governor crumpled up while Cripps signalized his exploit with a further discordant howl.

Dingwall looked at him.

"You're drunk, Mr. Cripps!" he said severely. "And what the devil are you doing here, anyhow?"

Majendie caught at him without ceremony, his original tactics forgotten.

"Awa' oot o' this, Captain!" said. "It's no healthy here—"

Dingwall cast a glance down at the prostrate governor; then he sniffed suspiciously.

"You're drunk, too, Mr. Engineer!" he said. "Disgraceful! Well, I'll deal with this later on. We'll leave now. A nice kind of experience for the master of a steamship, this has been. I come up here by invitation, to discuss matters of business—and would you believe it, that swine's had me for the last twenty minutes at the point of a pistol, writing instructions to Mr. Slade to allow a bunch of these dagos aboard tonight. The ship'd have been rushed by morning—that was the idea. Damned treacherous little scum! I'd like to kick the liver out of him!"

Cripps had been peering at the captain with dim persistence, as if not entirely sure of his man. Now he appeared to wake up suddenly, and doubled his

fists with something between a growl and a hiccup.

"Oh!" he said thickly. "'S you, is it? Dingwall, eh? Well, take that for a—"

He aimed an excellently intended blow at the skipper, but Majendie knocked his arm up and fairly hustled him from the room.

"This way, sirr, this way!" he said to Dingwall. "We'll skedaddle, if ye please!"

They ran down the drive, Dingwall in the lead, Majendie half dragging the indignant Cripps. The engineer was anticipating some rapid action in a moment or so, and he was not disappointed.

A dozen shadows detached themselves from the deeper darkness and fastened as one on Dingwall. There was a burst of swearing, sounds as of a strenuous scuffle on the ground, various whacks and bumps. Majendie released Cripps, and turned to meet a figure at his side. It was Ruiz.

"*Gracias, señor!*" he whispered. "We pay our debts—"

Without a word and with a single swing of his arm, Majendie heaved the weighty bag over his shoulder and struck a single blow. Ruiz went soundlessly to join the governor and the hapless person with the armpit holster.

"Hutt!" said Majendie. "That'll learn ye, ye dom corruptin' scamp, ye! Ye wad offer, eh? Weel, there's a lesson for ye!"

His tone of righteous indignation was a masterpiece. He set the bag down with great care at the roadside, and his face in the dark took on an expression of supreme canniness.

"An' noo, Captain," he said to himself, "for a rescue!"

In grim silence and with flailing fists he waded into the struggle. Cripps was already involved in it with the furious impartiality of the very drunk, and Captain Dingwall, to judge by ear, was giving an excellent account of himself. With Majendie's accession the fray was soon over. There was a great deal more wildcat language in Spanish and English, a further series of thumps and grunts, the scuffling of feet, and the three officers found themselves alone with the unconscious Ruiz.

Dingwall spoke pantingly, rearranging his collar.

"What the hell's all this?" he demanded.

Majendie was stealthily retrieving the bag from the roadside.

"Ou, it's nothin'—nothin' at a', Captain Dingwall, sirr! Dinna mention it—dinna mention it! Muster Cripps an' I ha' done naught but oor duty."

"What in blazes d'ye mean—duty? I'll give you duty, you infernal drunken Scotchman, you. You wait till we get back to the ship, that's all! And as for you, Mr. Cripps, you remember what I told you at dinner. I said I'd get you, and, by James, I have. I'll have your ticket for this, sir!"

Majendie was just commencing, "Why, ye damned auld ungrateful toad —" when from a little distance there came a flashing of lights and the sound of orders given in a crisp military voice.

He bit off the rest of his exordium.

"The polis!" he said hastily. "Run, sirrs, run!"

With one accord the *Claymore's* commander and his subordinates broke and bolted downhill for the dock. Enough, as Mr. Majendie confessed to himself, the bag clasped to his bosom, was enough.

At the top of the ladder Dingwall turned.

"I'll see you two officers in the morning," he stated. "It's about time you learned to behave yourselves—pair of drunken, insubordinate scamps!" His eye fell on the bag under Majendie's arm. "What's all that truck you're bringing aboard?" he asked acridly. "Let's have a look at it."

But the Scot stood firm.

"An' by whut richt d'ye interfere wi' ma private concerns, Captain Dingwall?" he demanded. "I'll be weel prepared, o' course, to deal wi' ony insinuations ye may think fit to make i' the mornin'—but ye've no shadow o' call to be queryin' ma goin's an' comin's in port! I'll show ye whut 'tis, if ye put it as an order—but I'm servin' ye wi' notice that I'll be havin' the consul ashore yonder oot o' his bed within the half-hour, for to tak' ma depositions agin ye. D'ye order me to open, Captain Dingwall, sirr?"

"Oh, go to hell!" said the skipper.

"Aye, aye, sirr!"

Mr. Majendie put the eloquence of a Demosthenes into the three syllables, and stalked below, outraged virtue in every line of his broad back.

Once in his own cabin, with Cripps—still considerably bemused—accompanying him, he broke into a gleeful snigger.

"There, Captain Dingwall, ye deil's buckie!" he said, slamming the bag of coins on the table. "There's for ye! Drunk, are we? Weel, we've got more the nicht than ye have—five hunner golden jimmy o' goblins, ma mannie, an' that's better than a bluidy nose an' a pair o' blue een, the whuch is yer ain share. Forbye," he added malignantly, "ye'll no ha' completed yon wee deal wi' the governor—an' that leaves ye stuck wi' a cargo of arms naebody'll buy from ye, he-he!"

He fumbled under his bunk, produced a bottle and took a sizable tot.

"Aha!" he said to Cripps. "Jimmy o' goblins, laddie! Feel 'em—let 'em rin through your fingers! Half's mine, half's yours—an' to hell wi' Captain Dingwall!"

He dragged out a roll and broke it open, letting the glittering stuff run into his palm.

"Whoosh!" he cried, spinning a coin in the air. "Thot's the stuff, Cripps ma—"

He clutched at the descending coin, missed it, and it fell with a thud on the table. There was a long, long silence.

THEN Mr. Majendie dropped his glass with a crash on the floor, and picked up the coin. He bit it. A queer, agonized expression crossed his face. He took it in his powerful mechanic's fingers—and snapped it in half with no more effort than it would have taken to break a match.

"Ma guid Lord!" groaned Mr. Majendie. "Ou, ma guid Lord!"

There were sudden footsteps in the alleyway outside, and a quick, authoritative tap at the door. Majendie, with a single swift motion, returned the offending roll of coins to the bag, and set it under the table.

"Who's yon?" he called.

"Captain Dingwall!" came from outside. "May I enter, gentlemen?"

Mr. Majendie stared at Cripps for an instant in growing bewilderment.

"Gentlemen, eh?" he muttered. "Whut's o' this noo? Cam' in, sirr—cam' in!" he said aloud.

To say that a change had come over the *Claymore's* master since his last interview with his engineer is putting it exceedingly mildly. His florid face was wreathed in a cheerful smile, and he held out his hand to the Scot in a manner that admitted no refusing it.

"Mr. Engineer," he said, "and you, Mr. Cripps, I've come to—er—apologize. I believe I may have used language awhile ago—under the stress of excitement, of course, gentlemen—that I—well, that I shouldn't. You'll have to forgive me, gentlemen!"

Mr. Majendie's expression at that moment would have made the fortune of any actor desiring to register complete and utter bewilderment. He gulped, half choked, shot a searching glance at Dingwall out of the corners of his eyes; finally he spoke in an odd, strangled voice.

"Weel, if ye say so, sirr—it's verra handsome, I'll say thot."

"Not a bit of it! Not a bit of it!" Captain Dingwall wrung his hand and turned to Cripps, who was staring at him with the expression of a dying codfish. The mate's hand was limp and clammy, but it made no difference to the skipper. "I'm sorry, Cripps. Can't say more, can I?"

Majendie was recovering himself. He thrust the whisky bottle at Dingwall.

"Ye'll tak' a dram, sirr?" he invited.

The captain would—effusively. He dropped into a chair.

"Er—kerhem!" He cleared his throat importantly. "There's a—ker-hem!—little affair I wished to discuss with you gentlemen," he began.

Majendie was watching him clos[illegible].

"Yes, Captain?" he said in a tone that might have meant anything at all.

"Er—I understand," Dingwell stated, "that these—ahem!—revolution chaps ashore had control of — er — English funds. Our agent was aboard while we were away, and—well, he passed the word to me. Left a note."

"Indeed, sirr?" Majendie was com-

pletely expressionless both in voice and manner.

"Yes. Now, I was just wondering, gentlemen—seeing you with that heavy bag—whether by any chance— You understand me? Y'know, I'd like to lay hands on some of that stuff—and I'm at a loss for—ahem—the goods I was running as—well, a private speculation of my own. I was wondering—"

He broke off and there was again a silence while Majendie eyed him thoughtfully.

"Mphm!" he said at last. "An' whut were ye suggestin', sirr?"

"Well," said Dingwall, "it's like this. You two must be in with those chaps ashore, eh? That is, of course, if those are sovereigns in that bag. Well, I'm not, of course—shouldn't have been dining with the governor tonight if I had been, eh? Now—" he adopted a bluff, business-like manner, "I'll tell you what I'll do, gentlemen. There's about a thousand pounds' worth of stuff in No. 2 hold, designed for this kind of—er—trade. It's no use to me, I'm sorry to say. The governor's on the run, I hear, and the revolution people are in charge. You know them, apparently. So what about taking half the goods off my hands, eh?"

Once again Majendie demonstrated that a great character actor—or poker expert—was lost to the world when he went to sea. His expression did not alter a particle.

"Weel," he said after the due pause, "o' course, Captain, there are deeficulties. In the firrst place, ye ken, it's no by ony means certain we'd find a market wi' the poleetical party ye mention. There's Muster Rooz, for instance, thot's a panjandrum or what-not in it, wi' a bruk head this instant, inadveertently sustained at ma ain hands. I'm thinkin' he'd tak' mair nor a little persuadin'. Howe'er, it micht be done, at that."

"Oh, of course it can be done," said Dingwall. "No doubt about it!"

"Mphm, aye—mebbe! An' then, Captain, there's anither foct—of whuch ye're o' course weel aware. There's forty or fufty per centum o' premium for Breetish gold hereaboots. Thot's so, is't no?"

"Well—ker-hem!—yes, Mr. Majendie." Dingwall blushed. "I believe there is some small—"

"Ou, it's natural eneuch, sirr—I'm far from blamin' ye. But I must say, sirr, the deal doesna appeal to me as it stands. What wi' the reesk to oorselves o' not securin' a market, an' the exchange ye'll be touchin' for these braw sovereigns here—weel, sirr, ye'll hae to mak' a better offer. On yer ain confession, ye've a cargo that's useless to ye on yer hands!"

Dingwall hesitated, and Majendie capped things by lugging out the bag and displaying—with precaution—the glint of the yellow metal.

"There's five hunner in gold there, sirr!" he said. "Noo, we'll hand ye ower the lot, in exchange for a transfer—duly witnessed, o' course, sirr—o' thot cargo."

"What, all of it? It's robbery!"

"Verra weel, sirr—we'll say nae mair aboot it. But I'd be wishful for leave to gae ashore firrst thing the morn, Captain—I dinna want to lose thot exchange, ye ken."

Dingwall glowered at him, much in his old high-and-mighty manner. Then he looked at the comfortable portliness of the bag, and Majendie chinked it again. Captain Dingwall surrendered.

"Oh, all right," he said, drawing papers from his pocket. "I'll do it. It's damned robbery, of course, but, after all, I can't sell the infernal stuff."

With the cook and the steward as witnesses, and much formality, he scrawled a transfer of the cargo. Majendie watched him keenly; then he handed him the bag without a word. The skipper straightened up.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, "I'm glad to have put this little deal through. I think you'll probably find some difficulty in disposing of that stuff, as you say—but that's your own lookout. I'm a hard man to beat, Majendie—you might remember that!"

The engineer tilted a further libation into the glasses.

"Weel, sirr," he said, "thot's as ye say. We'll jist wet it—an' here's hopin', Captain Dingwall, sirr, thot the tronsoction may be—h'm—mutually sotisfoctory to all parrties!"

He slipped the transfer into his pocket and buttoned it tight.

"Mphm, aye!" he said ruminatively.

THE FLIGHT OF *Truthful Dan*

By JOHN L. CONSIDINE

"ONCE," said the octogenarian gambler known to me as Truthful Dan Truman, "when I was young and foolish and hadn't learned that it is better to go around a row that through it, I invaded the State of Georgia in search of gain and ran into trouble with a capital T.

"I was playing poker with one of the hot headed natives, and he was rash enough to intimate that the average of full hands and flushes was exceeded whenever I dealt. He went to the hospital and I woke up in the county jail.

"It was pretty dull until the sheriff began to call around and tell me the news. The folks around there were kind of partial to the man in the hospital, and if I escaped lynching I was due for all a local judge and jury could hand me.

"'But don't you worry about the lynching part,' says the sheriff. 'I'm fairly wide awake and, if I hear of it in time, I'll loan you a pump gun and let you interpret your sentiments to the mob with it.'

"I stretched myself and gaped, kinda careless-like. 'Much obliged, friend,' says I, 'but while we're waiting for action it's kinda dull around here. Tell you what we'll do, just to kill time: You get me a deck of cards and a piece of chalk and I'll chalk a layout on the floor of my cell here and we'll have a little tiger of our own. Needn't go strong—it's just for pastime—we'll make it a penny a bet and a nickel the limit.'

"He was strong for it, but he thought the penny and nickel stuff too slow, so I says, 'O.K. Whatever you say.'

"Well, we started, using buttons for chips, the sheriff squatting on the floor outside the bars while I slipped the cards out on my side and placed the bets as he told me. In a few days, I had all his money. Then he sold a mule and I won that dough. He sold another mule, three cows and a bull. I got it all. He put up his watch and chain and suit of clothes. I won them.

"Inside of a week, my cell looked like a country store. Stacked around inside it were a pair of boots, four hams, a pair of scales, all the sheriff's letterheads, a barrel of flour and a saddle.

" 'Dan,' says he, 'I'll tell you what I'll do. You have won everything I can move except the old woman and the kids. I'm beginning to think your faro game ain't on the square, but I'll play you a game of seven-up; and if I win, I get back everything I lost to you. If you win, I'll turn you loose. What say?'

" 'It's a whack,' says I.

"We sat down, one on each side of the barred door, and I played for my life. The score stood six to six when I turned a jack.

" 'That settles it,' says the sheriff. 'That puts you out.' He unlocked the door and swung it wide. 'Now, damn you, get out, and go fast!'

"Well, you can bet I didn't saunter, but that derned sheriff was impatient enough to fire a shot at me as I went. I reckon he was too excited to shoot straight. Anyway, the bullet went over my head and crippled a darky that was working in a cornfield a little way ahead. I felt it was due to my mannerly bringing up to stop long enough to ask that darky how bad he was hurt, but, doggone it, that sheriff was too derned mean for me to take the chance."

Continuing

The BUNGLERS

By HUGH PENDEXTER

The Story Thus Far:

WHEN war clouds gathered over Great Britain and the young United States in 1812, Ramblin' Peevy left his clearing in the Tennessee hills and hastened to join General Hull's American army on the march to Detroit. Under the forest runner's experienced wing was young Jim Cassy, the seventeen-year-old son of Jim Cald, a friend he hadn't seen since, years before, Cald had quarreled with his sweetheart and quit the Southern hills for good.

Peevy managed to get word to Cald, now employed by a fur company in Canada, and the two old friends arranged a meeting. Peevy told Cald of the existence of his son—of his presence here in the American Army. Cald was heartbroken to discover that his Annie had been faithful to him all these years, and tried to make friends with his son. But young Jim, grieving over the wrong done his mother, refused to have anything to do with his father. Cald, preferring death to this intolerable state of affairs, took dangerous chances with his life with hostile Indians. When Peevy presented Cald with a bit of wampum given him by Tecumseh, the powerful chief of all the British Indians, a token which guaranteed the wearer safety from any red man who saw it, Cald eagerly took it to his son. But the boy haughtily refused the life-giving boon.

One night there came to the camp-fires of the Americans a strange, merry fellow who pretended to bring news of the British. The Americans were greatly amused by the antics of the odd creature—until they discovered, shortly after he took his departure, a youthful patriot murdered in cold blood. The long, narrow footprints near the body named the killer, whose peculiarly shaped feet had been noted by the Americans.

Cald became frantic, fearing that the lurking assassin might strike next at his own boy, and pleaded with Peevy to help him destroy the renegade, whom they called the Merry Andrew. The Tennesseean was more than willing, and suggested that the two investigate a suspicious islet known as Hog Island, some hours beyond the army on the march to Detroit.

"We'll maybe get a hawg or two, an' maybe that Merry Andrew. I'd like nothin' better'n to blow out his candle. The murderin' dog must have a hideout around here somewhere. We'll scout ahead of the army. Everybody'll be afoot now."

And, once on the island, his prophecy seemed correct. After discovering traces of footprints and marks left by the keel of a small boat on the shore, Peevy and Cald chanced upon a corner of the forest where the trees had been felled and made to appear as if they had blown down. Before he plunged beneath the fallen branches Peevy trimmed a sapling and jutted it into an opening

through the leaves. There was a savage click. The sapling was caught by a pair of steel jaws. Peevy declared angrily:

"That makes me madder than if he'd taken a shot at me. There may be a gun trap too. We'll swing some of these timbers aside."

THEY seized the tops and worked enough of the timber aside to reveal a small structure of logs, some three feet high and large enough to accommodate several sleeping men. The roof was made weatherproof by layers of bark.

Cald ripped off this covering and the supporting saplings and announced:

"Blankets. Rifle in a deerskin case, and a big bag of dressed leather."

Peevy said—

"That must be what he keeps his grub in."

"Too heavy," Cald corrected as he lifted the bag and backed into the clearing with it. "Hefts more like trade goods."

The mouth of the receptacle was secured by a drawstring, and Cald quickly loosened it and dumped the contents on the ground. Both men exclaimed softly in amazement.

"Dawggone! The scut's been stealin' or buyin' from the Northern Injuns."

Cald conceded that this explanation was logical, as the bag had held nothing but hair ornaments, four-inch wide armlets, bracelets and earrings, all of solid silver.

"No wonder the British hold their Injuns when they make presents like these," said Cald.

"An' we need it more'n the poor Injuns do," gravely said Peevy. "Jim, you've got to go to Detroit. You'll take this stuff along an' hide it west of the fort, where we can git it back after we've licked the enemy."

"My share will be a pretty penny for my boy an' his mother."

"Let's take a peek downstream," said Peevy. "If the way is clear you can pull out an' travel close along the west shore. No one on that side will try to jump you. If a boat puts out from the Canadian side just spit at 'em with your rifle. Take the extry gun along. You can always land an' hide in the woods if you have to."

"An' you're not comin'?"

"I'm goin' to Sandwich."

Cald was embarrassed and kept his gaze on the ground as he walked to the canoe. After carefully placing the bag in the craft, he straightened and met Peevy's gaze.

"You know it's the younker what pulls me away," he said.

"Of course, Jim. But don't go huntin' for him an' a-tryin' to make a talk with him. He's in black spirits. I pity him more'n I do you. We'll have to wait till he works out of it. I think a heap of him for thinkin' only of his little mother."

"God knows I've thought a heap about her! I was the worst fool in all these United States when I left Annie down in Tennessee—yes, sir, the worst fool in all these United States!"

"An' Canada," added Peevy. "Don't go to slightin' Canada just along of this war. Only place for you is in Congress. Wait a minute. Some scuts may have noticed two of us come upstream. Fix the blanket roll in the stern an' put your hat on it. That's it. From a distance it'll look like you was doin' all the work while I was takin' it easy."

Cald hesitated and stared at his friend.

"If anything should happen to you, Ramblin', I never can forgive myself," he said.

"An' I wouldn't forgive myself, either. You bein' along wouldn't help me any if there was real trouble. Ordinary trouble I can take care of. But there ain't nothin' goin' to happen to me. By this time tomorrer, or earlier, our pickets oughter be firin' at me as I try to git back to our side."

With a hand on the side of the canoe, Cald paused to say:

"Mebbe Hull will be crossin' tonight. If he does, be keerful our men don't shoot you by mistake."

Peevy gave once more his view of Hull's initiative:

"Hull will cross, without bein' ordered by the War Department, about the same time I can cure a man sufferin' from sunstroke by rubbin' him agin a man that's been frostbitten. Be off! Hug the west shore—keep away from the boy."

CHAPTER V

DISGUISES

WITH the coming of darkness Peevy crossed the river and landed on the Canadian shore at a point opposite the lower end of Hog Island. Hearing voices, he took refuge in the stone mill on the shore. A man was saying:

"But why haven't they crossed and attacked us? They came up here to make war. Two or three shells would destroy our works."

"Our lookouts in Detroit have discovered no signs of an immediate crossing," said a second voice.

"But they must come to us, else die of very shame. Colonel St. George vows he'd rather accept battle in the open field than to stand an attack while bottled up in what surely would become a slaughterhouse. Our Indians are getting afraid. None will spend the night in the fort for fear of being there when an assault is made."

"Well, here's the mill. We'll see if our man left anything."

Peevy noiselessly withdrew as far as possible. His outstretched hand came in contact with a hogshead, and he crouched behind it. The man advanced only two steps from the entrance. Peevy heard his fingers fumbling in some hiding place in the stout masonry. Had there been but one to overcome, the Tennesseean would have offered battle for what was now rustling between the man's fingers. His companion outside impatiently called—

"Well, what luck?"

"He left something. Now we'll go back."

Peevy did not attempt to follow them. His objective was decided upon before he left Hog Island. When he believed the way was clear he made direct for the two-story brick house occupied by Colonel Francis Babie. The ground floor was illuminated by many candles. Peevy, glancing through the windows, observed that while the floor was laid no partitions had been erected. The colonel was walking about and talking with his son.

A group of men rounded the corner, and their presence compelled the intruder to move along. But the light from the windows had revealed him. A man remarked:

"That's a long rifle our friend is carrying. I've seen his like down in the Kentucky country. Rifleman, wait a bit!"

But Peevy lengthened his stride and had turned the corner when the group broke into a run. The men held back, however, when they found him sounding the knocker. The door was opened by the colonel's son, who greeted in French—

"Who the devil are you, my gaunt friend?"

Peevy, using the Creole patois of Louisiana, replied—

"I come to speak with your father."

"You look like a long nosed Yankee."

"I do not believe it. I have no truck with codfish-eating Yankees. I can't help my looks. I come to speak with your father."

"What's the matter, son?" called out the colonel as he came to the door.

Then he recognized the caller and was all smiles as he warmly shook hands with the Tennessee man. Over his shoulder he told his son:

"An old acquaintance. Two years ago, in New Orleans, he did me a great service."

"Then this place is his," heartily said the younger Babie. To Peevy he apologetically said, "I really cculdn't believe you to be a damned Yankee spy. Any such would not wander about so openly. Come in."

After the door was closed on the curious militia, young Babie produced a slip of paper for Peevy to read and explained:

"Just delivered to me. Sent across by one of our lookouts in Detroit. I naturally was suspicious of all strangers."

Peevy stepped closer to a sconce of candles and found the two lines of snaky writing to read:

> An American spy in all probability will be wandering around your neighborhood tonight. He is a very dangerous man, and should be killed on sight. —CAPTAIN WEEN

"Never heard of Captain Ween," said Peevy as he handed the paper back.

Colonel Babie smiled and clapped a hand on Peevy's shoulder, but his eyes were worried as he watched his son pass out to chat with the militia. Then he led the way to the back of the huge room and motioned for Peevy to be seated. Between his teeth he gritted:

"Mad fool! Why do you come here?"

"Sort of wanted some help, Cunnel. You was warm to have me come any time. But if I'm in the wrong shop I'll be leavin'." Peevy rose as if to depart.

"Impossible imbecile! Sit down. But if an officer comes along I'll be hard put to save you."

"Ain't askin' to be saved. Reckon I have a right to drop in to pay a little visit to an old friend."

"M'sieur Peevy, I am, as you speak, your old friend. I have not forgotten I owe you my life."

"I had. Nonsense, Cunnel. You'd got clear, all right. I happened to know some of the outfit. But the thought of bein' killed ain't pleasant, is it?"

The night was very warm; yet the colonel shivered and murmured:

"I can see those cursed knives even now! My friend, you have some purpose. You came here for what?"

"I need to be told somethin'."

"You are with Hull's army?"

"Of course. Only army up here."

Babie's face became very grave. He said:

"I'll do anything in my power to repay in some measure the debt I owe you. But to save your life, or my life, I can not betray my country."

"Lawd bless your simple natur'! Don't I know that? I ain't askin' anything about your army. I'm hard put to understand our own army. One army at a time is my style. I want to l'arn somethin' about a man who is known among the Americans as the Merry Andrew."

The colonel drew a deep breath of relief and said solemnly—

"I say on my honor that I know no such man."

"Not his handle. Of course not. He comes to spy on our army."

"I would be a traitor to betray one of our spies. Come, come, old friend! You won't ask me to do anything dishonorable."

"I ain't askin' you anything that's lowdown, or even just a bit ornery. What would you say of a man who visited our boys, when we was down in the black swamp, and a goodish distance from Detroit, who was fed at our mess kettles, an' l'arned what he come to l'arn, an' then murdered a younker in cold blood?"

"You mean one of our spies killed a soldier when he did not need to do so in order to escape?"

"Killed a boy. Done it when he wa'n't in any danger. Our fellers liked him for his comical ways an' funny dancin'. He made our boys laugh. He got what he come for an' was free to go. He was outside our lines an' happens upon a lad he had joked an' talked with—an' he killed him in cold blood."

"Why, that's beastly!" exclaimed the colonel.

"I think so. I want to know where I can find him an' cook his goose. Not along of his bein' a spy, or a friend of the Britishers, but just along of his bein' his own miserable, murderin' self."

"My son showed you the message from one of our men on your side the river, who knew you were over here. But, Andrew—I know none of our men who are called that."

"I didn't think you would, Cunnel. But I do reckon a heap on his feet."

The colonel gaped in further surprise.

"Did I understand you rightly? Did you say feet?"

"Said both of 'em. Long, narrer feet that leave a long narrer track. No one ever see another such pair of slim, narrer hoofs."

"Oh-ho! Yes, I remember that man. He is peculiar. He's much among the Indians after they've received their yearly gifts from his Majesty. He does quite a trade with them for their silver ornaments. According to some traders' view he cheats the red men. But so do all traders make the best bargain they can, measured by the white man's standard of values. I remember hearing when he was employed as a spy, to secure news of Hull's army. But no spy is instructed to kill, except it be to protect himself. You call him—?"

"The Merry Andrew. He gave his name as Andrew. He dances in such a

funny way he made the men laugh. That is, he did until they found his tracks beside the body of the murdered boy."

"He isn't fit to live," said the colonel. "I can't tell you much. He's probably in Detroit."

"His name?"

"I believe I can tell you that," slowly said the colonel. "He is Captain Ween. Of a fine family. As a boy he ran away and lived with the Winnebago Indians. He has great influence with them. He has worked for the Northwest Fur Company. I know that Porthier of the Northwest gave him trading privileges because of his service to the company. Although commissioned a captain he never will be given command of a white company. I am stating it mildly when I say he is queer. Yet, in his way, his shrewdness is uncanny."

"Stayin' with some French family in Detroit?"

"Probably, unless he sleeps out like a wild animal. No Detroit family would harbor him if it knew he was guilty of murder."

"Cunnel, you've done noble by me. If there was any debt between us you've wiped it out."

"I still am in your debt. You're in danger, but I was on the edge of death. If you search every house in Detroit I doubt if you find the man you're looking for. Yet I believe he must be in some one of the houses."

"By Judas! We can burn the houses an' sift the ashes! How can a man hide in a house an' not be found?"

"For the excellent reason you'd be looking for a man."

"Good land! Don't tell me he's a woman!"

"Hark! I hear singing. You must slip into the darkness. They'll be officers. They'll examine you too shrewdly."

As he spoke he linked arms with Peevy and hurried to the outer door, where he extinguished the candles which illuminated the entrance. Peevy complained:

"You're sendin' me back emptyhanded. Friendship is older than war. At least, older than this war."

With his lips close to Peevy's ears the colonel whispered:

"Look for a woman!"

"Merry Andrew a squaw!" groaned Peevy.

"He can *pass* for a woman anywhere. Look for a man in skirts. Now be off, as if the devil was lashing his forked tail at you."

WITH the truth in his ears, Peevy could not return to the American shore too quickly. He pictured all sorts of horrid crimes being perpetrated by the disguised spy, as he ran through the darkness to the river.

As he neared the old stone mill a figure detached itself from the deep shadows and approached him. He threw up his rifle, cocked it and warned:

"Keep back! I'm as mad as a wet hen."

A sonorous voice inquired—

"Does my brother shoot his friend?"

"Tecumseh!" softly exclaimed Peevy.

The great chief drew close. Despite the humid heat of the night he had a blanket over his head. With an entire absence of the red man's usual indirection of speech he came to the point at once by demanding—

"What does my friend do on this side the water?"

"I hunt a man to kill him."

"If the man is bad flesh, it is good. Is he a red man?"

"He is a white man who killed a boy in Hull's army. He came to spy an' was outside our lines when he came upon the boy an' killed like a wild beast."

"He is bad flesh. My brother should have good hunting."

"He has long, narrer feet," Peevy contined. "He has traded with the red men for their gifts of white metal which were sent them by the chief of the *Englishmanakes* across the big water."

"Tecumseh knows that man. He is bad flesh. The Winnebagos alone will follow him. But—men come."

Peevy slipped down the bank and into his canoe, and with one thrust of the paddle shot on a long diagonal toward the lights of Detroit by the time the patrol came up to the mill. Their voices carried through the still night.

Peevy heard one demand:

"Have you seen a spy along here? We hunt for an American spy."

The sonorous voice of the chief in evasion replied—

"Tecumseh has seen only friends this night."

The crossing was accomplished without further incident, and the man from Tennessee was wandering among the houses of Detroit. He hoped to find Captain Ween. He was confident he could recognize the killer regardless of any disguise. The abnormal feet could not be made to look normal. He approached window after window and frankly looked inside. As Indians ever were staring in at windows this kind of spying attracted no attention from those within, or without. He came to one house which enjoyed the luxury of two rooms, being partitioned off by a curtain of Hudson Bay blankets. His glance through the window caught a glimpse of skirts disappearing into the rear room. In the outer room a man and woman were sewing skins.

With his coonskin hat askew Peevy opened the door and entered to the accompaniment of the "Song of the Eldest Daughter." The man scowled at the intruder and harshly announced—

"You'll get no rum here!"

Peevy, now presenting an excellent picture of a man genially drunk, explained:

"I'm in Hull's army. Want to make friends with all the good folks here at Detroit."

"My wife an' me are hard workin' folks. Look for friends elsewhere," answered the man.

The woman spoke to her husband in French, saying—

"Gently does it."

The man exclaimed in English:

"Gently, hell! Injuns are bad enough, but I won't stand for Hull's woodrats enterin' my home. Get out, or I'll call the guard an' get you thirty of the cat, well laid on."

"We don't do much whippin' in our army," Peevy genially explained. "Up to now we ain't whipped anybody."

The woman, fearing her husband would indulge in violence, said:

"General Hull has said we wouldn't be bothered. Please go."

Peevy smirked, bowed low and backed through the door; he resumed his singing. Then he bent low and ran to the rear of the house. He was pleased that it had no rear door. Taking a position so he could watch the side window and the front of the house, he squatted on his heels and listened in the hope of hearing the tramping of the night patrol.

Singing on the waterfront a short distance downstream advertised the presence of soldiers in a jovial mood. Peevy threw back his head and gave a shrill cry. One of the soldiers was quick to recognize it, for he called out:

"Ramblin' Peevy's in need of help! Up the road a bit."

Almost at once a dark mass of humanity came running along the bank. At the same moment the door of the cabin opened sufficiently to permit a slim figure to emerge. Peevy heard the flutter of skirts as the person ran north along the bank. With his hunting knife in one hand and his long rifle in the other, Peevy took up the pursuit. As he bounded along he feared lest the fugitive run between the houses and hide in the darkness. He rejoiced when he realized that his quarry preferred to make a race of it.

Not until he was in the northern outskirts of the little settlement did he succeed in overhauling the runaway. He dropped the rifle and roughly seized his captive by the shoulder and drew back his knife hand, ready to play the executioner. Then he released his grip, and under his breath cursed his stupidity in not having anticipated such a simple ruse.

"M'sieur, you hurt me!" gasped a shrill voice.

"You run the risk of the job you worked on me, young woman," growled Peevy. "Why did you play that tarnal trick? Your man should have stopped you. Lucky you didn't catch a bullet."

"So Hull's men shoot women," she sneered.

"Not yet. We ain't shot nothin' yet. But why did you come that game?"

"Who is M'sieur to say where or when Francois Sally's wife shall go, or how fast she shall travel?

"Tricked!" snorted Peevy in high dis-

gust.

Forthwith he pounded back to meet the squad of soldiers.

"Surround this house, men! I'm mortal sure the Merry Andrew was in there, dressed like a woman."

A youngster stepped forward and, with the butt of his gun, caused the door to fly open. The owner faced the squad, his features ugly with hate and rage. But he deemed it best to make no protest. Peevy brushed by him and darted to the back room. On the floor was a small mound of woman's clothing.

Turning back, he told the file of soldiers:

"That killer-devil was in here, dressed like a woman. This man's wife ran out and led me in a chase up the river bank, so's to give the murderin' scut a chance to slip away. Sergeant, better take this man into camp. I'll tell my story. If he's been hidin' the man who killed one of our soldiers, he'll swing high."

"General Hull promised that we wouldn't be disturbed," sullenly insisted the prisoner. "I have had no spy in my house."

The sergeant tapped him on the shoulder. He quickly was surrounded and marched down to the flaring torches of an officers' mess. General Hull, who had been strolling nervously from group to group, stayed his departure on beholding the prisoner. He asked—

"Sergeant, with what offense is this man charged?"

"Harborin' a suspicious person, sir."

"A most bloody spy," spoke up Peevy. "The same what killed one of our boys down in the black swamp."

"Where is that spy?" demanded the general.

Peevy explained the ruse by which the suspect had escaped. Hull drew down his brows and turned to the prisoner. The latter was prompt and very vehement in registering innocence. He loudly denied that any man, masquerading as a woman, had ever been in his house. A woman had come and asked the use of the curtained-off room while she shifted her clothes. After making the change she had departed. His wife, going to call on a neighbor, had been chased and frightened by the rifleman. The latter had been most insulting and abusive. All the citizens of Detroit would fear the American army and would cross into Canada where they might be safe. His wife came up at that juncture and in a volley of French assailed Peevy with vitriolic energy.

Hull was greatly disturbed. He had proclaimed to all the people of the little settlement that their property and persons would be most respectfully treated. He feared lest the eight hundred-odd population, largely French, would be so many more enemies who would work to embarrass his campaign without taking the field.

"Turn that man loose," he suddenly ordered. Then to Peevy, "And you, sir, be careful to show more discretion the next time you fancy you smell a spy."

"Prob'ly never shall come so near to catchin' one agin, Gineral. Not 'less they run in shoals like fishes. I all but had the Merry Andrew when this little woman decoyed me away an' fooled me right pert an' smart."

"That's sufficient from you. You men bear in mind that we have nothing but good will for all our friends in Detroit. They must not be annoyed."

He then returned to his quarters, still undecided as to what step he might take which would not run counter to the next orders forwarded by the War Department.

Peevy went along with the patrol to a fire where soldiers were frying fish and roasting meat. Of these he inquired for young Cassy.

"He's back along with McArthur's regiment," said one man.

"Where's that tall, rangy he-critter I've been teamin' with all the way up here? Meanin' Jim Cald."

"I know him," spoke up a man. "Saw him just before sundown. Comin' from back of the fort. Looked sick. Sort of ailin'. Mebbe the water don't agree with him."

"Any one been singin' 'Sinclair's Defeat' durin' the last twenty-four hours?"

"No," said the sergeant. "We seemed to sort of forgit, along of not havin' young Cassy to start it goin'."

"That sartainly shows that war ain't always hell," cryptically remarked Peevy. "Much obleeged to you, boys. Just remember this, an' look sharp. The

Merry Andrew has been stoppin' in Sally's cabin, dressed as a woman. He changed back to men's clothes an' left his woman's gear in that cabin. I chased the little woman, who acted as a decoy."

CHAPTER VI

THE INVASION

THE arrival of Colonel Elijah Brush at the head of the Michigan militia may have caused Hull to recede from his positive refusal to invade Canada while lacking specific orders to that effect from Washington. His army numbered more than two thousand effective men. Or he may have realized the futility of holding Detroit, with the enemy's cannon ready to destroy both fort and town. Only by the closest search and great activity did he secure sufficient river craft for ferrying four hundred men across at a time. Such piecemeal penetration would not suffice to secure a footing on the Canadian shore.

Hull surprised his staff by resorting to successful strategy. On the evening of July 12th he ordered the boats to float down to Spring Wells, and he commanded Colonel McArthur to march his regiment to the same point. The British forces were promptly shifted downstream to oppose any landing. But once dusk was succeeded by darkness the flotilla was moved silently up the river to Bloody Bridge, one and a half miles above Detroit. The enemy, believing the Americans were down the river and preparing to attack Malden, promptly switched its Sandwich force to prevent the landing.

With the first light of dawn Peevy happened upon young Cald and said—

"After all, old Hull's got a head on him."

"I don't care whether we cross, run away, or just do nothin'," mumbled Cald.

"Court-martial talk," warned Peevy. "You've been eatin' somethin' that don't sit well on your stummick."

"I'm the most miserable man in the world." This admission was followed by a melancholy groan.

"T'other Jim Cald—"

"My pap!" snarled the boy.

"An' a mighty lovin' pap he is, an'—"

"Like hell!"

Peevy frowned.

"Boys ain't what they used to be. Know more'n their folks. Why I can remember when my pap was set on a high stool in a corner for bein' sassy to his gran'pap. They sartainly knew how to raise children in them days."

"Your pap never run away an' kept himself lost for nigh on to twenty years, did he?"

Peevy winced and endeavored to blunt the point of the crisp query by saying:

"If he didn't it was along of mam keepin' an eye on him. This goin' away habit is strong in lots of men. Ain't I away? Ain't my little woman still waitin' for the molasses I was to fetch back so she could make a cake? You think I like to act that way?"

The query was intended to sustain the rhetorical effect.

Young Cald promptly answered in the affirmative.

"Well, no siree! I don't like to be like that. But while a man can change his shirt once in a while, he can't change his feet. Wanderin' feet has been a cuss to me. But you ain't got any call to be sittin' in judgment. Your pap's your pap. Treat him at least as well as you would a rattlesnake."

"I shan't treat him at all. I shan't see him. I ain't got any pap."

"If the younger gineration be like that, then I'm glad I ain't got any children . . . Well, it's our turn to be crossin'. But your pap's a mighty good man, no matter how you measure him."

The boy winced. Peevy pitied him because of the tragedy the young mind was staging. He was deeply concerned for the two of them.

The regular troops and almost all of the Ohio volunteers were across. These had expected to be raked by a hidden battery in the old stone mill. But no resistance was offered. The landing was at the same spot where Peevy had drawn up his boat when he went a-spying. It was a Sunday morning, and the wind was soft and from the south. When Colonel Cass raised the American flag

the spectators joined with the soldiers in cheers for the Stars and Stripes. The French-Canadians were cordial. The troops went into camp on Colonel Babie's farm, the mansion being taken over by Hull and his staff for headquarters.

A proclamation, written by Colonel Cass, was issued by Hull. It was well received. None was asked to join the invading army, but to remain on his farm and continue the ordinary duties of life. If these conditions were established every householder would be guaranteed protection. There was another and less amiable side of the picture, however. No quarter would be shown any man found fighting in company of the Indians. Hull also promised an "indiscriminate scene of desolation at the first stroke of a tomahawk".

The successful invasion, the proclamation,* the floating flag of the Republic, all made a deep impression. The Canadian militia deserted in large numbers, returning to their farms and, in some cases, joining Hull's army. Some, their minds poisoned by fearsome stories of the invaders' cruelty, fled to the forests.

PEEVY and Cald were sitting by Bill's cooking kettle. Cald sat with his head bowed low, his soul in the depths of despair. Peevy roughly shook him by the shoulder.

"Kick that black dog in the head! Wake up! Sun's shinin'. We won a glorious victory over our War Department. We've snuck into Canada before the Government could let Canada know we was comin'."

"I wish I was dead," mumbled Cald.

"Nothin' much to wish for, besides sidin' in with the enemy," said Peevy. "Let's you an' me poke round a trifle an' l'arn how an' where the enemy is located. Come along. Mebbe you'll git killed."

"Look! My own flesh an' blood, an' he disowns me!" It was a groan as well as an exclamation.

From under his shaggy brows Peevy surveyed young Cald. The boy looked neither to right nor left as he passed them. Then came a diversion. A brawny Kentucky man leaped upon Peevy's back and endeavored to rub his big nose in the dirt. For a few moments the air was filled with flying arms and feet. When strenuous gyrations had ended and the dust had settled, Peevy was kneeling on his assailant, both hands gripping the man's ears so that the shaggy head could be more effectually banged on the ground.

"Abe Gutherie!" exclaimed the Tennessee man joyfully when he recognized the distorted face. "Knew it was some old friend when you mounted me. How's your missis an' the younkers?"

"In fine fettle when I left 'em, Peevy. S'pose you git off my chest. I think I'll try an' sit up for awhile."

Peevy came to his feet, yanking the Kentucky man after him. Then he explained to Cald:

"This is Abe Gutherie—one of the best men unhung. Never knew you was with the army, Abe. But I guessed who you be the minute your knees struck my back."

"Been dispatch bearer. Young feller told me you was with the army." Then, with a quick side glance at Cald, he said, "Say, mister, if you was a million years younger I'd say it was you who told me that Peevy was with the army."

Cald's eyes widened. In a low voice he said—

"Prob'ly my son."

Gutherie wrinkled his lips and complained:

"No sense in lettin' boys into this game. Enough men without takin' younkers."

"Abe, you have news, if you be a dispatch bearer. If there is any sense to this business, I want to know it. What next?"

"We're sendin' a party to Amherstburg tomorrer. Eighteen miles below here."

"Glory be! That's where the Girtys, Elliot an' McKee hang out. I'm goin' along. If I can't find enough bordermen to burn those skunks for leadin' Injuns

*This proclamation and the invasion were indorsed by the Secretary of War in a letter dated August 1st. Yet for fifty years historians have claimed the proclamation was unauthorized by the United States. American commissioners at the Treaty of Ghent made the same assertion. The proclamation has been cited for half a century as one of Hull's sins. In his letter Secretary Eustis also wrote: "Your operations are approved."

agin our frontiers, then I'll surrender my huntin' knife. Want to come along, Cald, an' have some fun?"

Cald stared blankly for a moment. Then he said—

"I want to go where I can git killed."

"You'd make a homely lookin' dead hero," said the Kentucky man. "Peevy, Cap'n Ulery of Findlay's regiment will command our scout band. I'm tryin' to find some rum."

He abruptly hurried away. Peevy watched him out of sight, and then said—

"There's a man you can tie to."

"Why wait for the mounted troops?" grumbled Cald. "Let's git two hosses an' ride down there."

"I'm a coward. You want to git yourself killed. We'll go with t'others, or I'll have you put under guard."

Cald swept his bleak gaze about, searching for his son. Then he said:

"Wait here for a bit. Mebbe I can find some officer's rum."

Peevy nodded but scrutinized his friend sharply. Cald swung off at a rifleman's forest lope. Peevy observed his course and took one parallel to it, and he was at the rear end of the Babie mansion when Cald came up. Young Cald was sitting under a tree, moodily staring down at the ground. His father, desperate from horrible fears, halted before the boy and said abruptly—

"I want you to wear Tecumseh's wampum."

"I won't be favored above other folks," said the boy, switching his gaze to the river.

"Won't you do it for the sake of your mother?"

The lad's head came about, his face twisting under the mental torture he was suffering. His voice was hoarse as he demanded—

"Rather late in the day, ain't it, for you to be frettin' an' fussin' about me doin' things for my mother?"

"If I come out of this fuss alive mebbe your mother will forgive me for any wrong I done her."

"I can't," said the boy, and his head sank lower.

Thus dismissed the moody senior Cald walked to an apple tree and boldly appropriated a courier's horse from Sloan's cavalry troop and rode unchallenged through the camp and to the south. He was clear of the pickets when a pounding of hoofs caused him to jerk his head about, a wild hope surging through his mind. Then he slumped.

Peevy reined in beside him and demanded—

"What'n hot Tophet you mean by a-sneakin' off to have some fun an' leavin' me behind, you two-legged skunk?"

"Better go back, Ramblin'," said Cald. "I had a short talk with the boy. I've thought it all out. You can't cure a long sickness by weak medicine. I'm after a strong medicine, what will be good for what ails me."

Peevy's voice was very cheerful and he nodded his head approvingly.

"I've had a snort out the same bottle. We'll both git ourselves killed, an' my little woman will be called 'the widder of the hero of Hull's campaign.' You cheater! You're makin' for Amherstburg to hog all the best fightin'." He glanced back and exclaimed, "Ulery an' his men are comin'. We'll keep well ahead, or they'll send us to a court-martial for hoss stealin'."

For nine miles the two maintained their lead over the troopers, until they came to the bridge over Turkey Creek. Cald would have galloped across had not Peevy seized his horse and turned him around. Then he harshly commanded—

"You wait here."

He advanced to the edge of the bridge, after making sure his silver neck ornament was conspicuously displayed. Almost instantly the head and shoulders of Tecumseh appeared by a clump of cherry bushes. He gestured for the two men to turn back. He closed and opened the fingers of both hands rapidly, and swept his arms in a half circle behind him.

Peevy wheeled his mount, seized Cald's animal by the bridle and urged both animals some distance from the bridge. Captain Ulery came up at the head of his troop and demanded:

"What the devil you two men doing down here? And on those horses?"

"Just scoutin' the enemy, Cap'n. Found these nags what had strayed. Tecumseh has a ambush at t'other end

of the bridge. Woods filled with red niggers."

Ulery ordered his men to dismount and scout the banks above and below the bridge. Soon the men were running back and reporting that there were many savages across the stream. The reconnoitering party promptly wheeled and rode off without a shot being fired. Peevy and Cald trailed after the troop.

ON RECEIVING Ulery's report Hull ordered fortifications to be thrown up along the Detroit River. During Ulery's absence he had received word that the enemy was sending a fleet up the Detroit to cooperate with a land force. Peevy and Cald were much chagrined to learn they had missed some sprightly action by venturing down to Turkey Creek. In their absence Colonel McArthur with a hundred men, including young Cald, had pursued a band of Indians to and across the Ruscum River, and had brought back much flour and many blankets.

On the following day young Cald emerged from his black mood long enough to complain:

"Why'n sin be we waitin' here? Reckoned we come up here to fight."

"Put that man under arrest!" an officer commanded loudly.

"Another victory for Hull," muttered Peevy. "Start a courier for Washington."

"Thank the Lawd!" mumbled Cald. "It'll keep him out of danger for a bit. But I'll shoot the officer who orders him to be whipped!"

"Keep shut," cautioned Peevy. "This army ain't goin' to whip nawthin'. Without any leader it don't amount to a tinker's dam. Hull's prob'ly waitin' to hear from Washington if his men are to shoot back if fired upon by the enemy."

With his son in duress for three days, Cald was almost happy. The complete conquest of the Canadian side of the Detroit simply required a reaching forth and taking of the defenses at Malden. During this period of inactivity the belief was expressed by some of the rank and file that the commanding officer was a coward. Peevy insisted this was a rank injustice, inasmuch as Hull had been a fearless officer during the Revolutionary War. Possibly his years had incapacitated him for waging war. On July 21st he crossed to Detroit, leaving Colonel McArthur in command for four days.

On emerging from his confinement, young Cald sought his father and bitterly said—

"An' you never moved a hand to git me out!"

"He'd looked pretty if he had as much as opened his mouth," quickly spoke up Peevy. "This army's in a bad enough fix without privates tryin' to boss the officers. But you ain't missed nothin', younker. Haven't heard of any battles bein' fit, have you? An' you're set free just in time to capture Malden. We're all a-goin' with Cap'n McCullough an' his Rangers to cross the Canard above the bridge. We'll keep out of range of the shore battery an' the guns of the *Queen Charlotte*.

"With Hull away we'll wind up this end of the war as quick as George Hawg down home could run. He'd stand with his back to the sun so's his tall shadder would stretch out ahead of him, an' then he'd foot it so fast he'd reach his cabin half a minute ahead of his shadder. But, younker, the boys would be in better spirits if we could have a stirrin' song."

Returning to Cald, Peevy sighed dismally and announced:

"No one can now say I ain't made a sacrifice for my country. I've gone an' invited the younker to lead the singin' of 'Sinclair's Defeat.' I've heaved that much on the altar of liberty. Good land! Here it comes, an', Lawd, don't I dread it!"

> "Yet three hours more we fought them, an' then were forced to yield.
> When three hundred bloody warriors lay stretched upon the field:
> Says Colonel Gibson to his men, 'My boys, be not dismayed:
> I'm sure that true Virginians were never yet afraid.' "

"He's feelin' better," whispered Cald, senior, his dull eyes lighting.

"I most mortally hope somebody's feelin' better," grumbled Peevy.

"Courier! Courier!" a man shouted,

and others soon were repeating the cry.

A man from Detroit had mounted a horse near the stone mill and was riding in hot haste to the Babie mansion. The soldiers quickly gathered, as curious as children. Colonel McArthur appeared in the doorway of the mansion as the horseman flung himself to the ground and whipped two papers from his belt.

Peevy whispered to Cald—

"Bet our gineral sends orders for us to go to bed early, so's to save our strength."

McArthur opened a paper, and the nearby soldiers caught the woeful expression of the strong face as he read the few lines of writing. Slowly folding the paper, he lifted his voice so that all might hear:

"General Hull informs me that Mackinac has been taken over by the enemy. Men, that means our business up here is even more serious. It means that whatever we do must be done quickly . . . Ah! This second paper is from the War Department—"

He held it unopened and glanced about at the members of his staff. The thought was in more than one mind that Hull had been recalled and that McArthur had been appointed in his stead. There was silence as the colonel slowly opened the paper. The situation was vibrant with stirring drama. The onlookers saw the colonel's brows rise, as if in bewilderment. Men held their breath as the brows came down in a frown.

Lifting his head, he said:

"Did I not know the Secretary of War's signature I would pronounce this a most ill timed joke. I believe that we have a soldier by the name of Peevy?"

"My name, Cunnel. Better known as Ramblin' Peevy, along of losin' about four inches of legs a year in trampin' up an' down this land of freedom."

"Then this communication undoubtedly is for you."

The colonel extended the sheet of paper. Peevy stared at it intently and gave voice to a deep sigh. Handing the paper to Cald, he mumbled—

"I'm done for, whether we win or lose this war."

Cald stared at the paper for a few seconds before he could decipher the cramped writing. He read it aloud, the better to grasp its significance, then reread it:

> Mister Peevy. I know where you be. I shall be waiting for you when you come home.

"It's the little woman," sighed Peevy. "I was hopin' she'd reckoned I'd gone to N'Orleans." He reached for the message, reread it, and a wide smile slowly cracked his rugged features. "She's a rare one!" he softly exclaimed. "Never was a woman who talked more truth. Says she'll be waitin' for me! Don't I know it!"

"Soldier," spoke up the colonel, "it's most unusual for such trivial correspondence to be forwarded under the frank of the War Department. In answering this communication you will tell the lady not to clutter up our already poor lines of communications with such personal matters. I do not understand how she could forward that letter under the Government's frank and by a Government courier."

"Cunnel, I'll face the enemy singlehanded, but I won't ruin myself forever more, amen, by givin' no orders whatsoever to Mrs. Peevy. She knows every one in Tennessee, from Andy Jackson down; an' they'll do about as she asks. She knows all the Southern members of the Government. They'll do as she asks. I have to keep away from my home to stop her from sendin' me to Congress or the Senate."

McArthur gestured for his staff to follow him inside the big house. Peevy was surrounded by friends, clamoring to see the letter, when a messenger arrived from Captain McCullough, who had been sent to find a passage for the artillery across the Canard above the bridge. Peevy knew the man, and hailed him. The messenger was pleased to pause and chat with an old friend. He told Peevy the burden of the message he bore to the colonel:

"Too swampy to git our cannon over the Canard unless we use the bridge. Bridge's ambushed. I seen Injuns between the Canard an' Turkey Creek. Well, s'pose I must go inside an' give the writin' to the cunnel."

AS a result of this message a hundred militia, under Major Denny, were sent to drive the Indians back. This body marched all night and in early morning uncovered a red ambuscade at the Petit Cote settlement and captured a Frenchman, captain of a Malden militia company. Shortly thereafter the militia was forced to retreat when one end of the thin line gave ground. The red warriors pursued for more than two miles. Peevy and Abe Gutherie were among those who brought up the rear. Cald, who was with these two friends at the first of the fighting, had become separated from them. Peevy, much enraged, continually shouted for the men to turn and meet the savages, who numbered only a score or more. But the flight did not end until the Turkey Creek bridge had been crossed, where the fugitives met reenforcements. Six of Denny's men were killed. This was the first bloodshed in the war.

Thoroughly disgusted, Peevy hurried to the Babie mansion, hoping to find Cald. For the moment he forgot his worry about his friend once he learned that the killer-spy, Andrew, had been brought in a prisoner. That the man had not been killed offhand was due to his disguise, which was that of a squaw. While Peevy and his friends were devising means of hurrying the assassin's death, a messenger arrived and, among other items, reported Cald had been captured and taken to the Malden fort.

Peevy quickly secured an interview with Colonel McArthur and asked permission to visit Fort Malden under a flag and effect an exchange for Cald. McArthur was in a black mood because of the rout of the troops by less than two-score Indians. He was further disturbed by official word that Hull was about to resume command of the army. He was inclined to refuse Peevy's request.

Peevy insisted, saying:

"My little woman down in Tennessee could win this war with a brush broom an' a fryin' pan. But if Cald ain't traded for, this army will shrink most amazin'."

"Be careful, sirrah! Your talk sounds mightily like treason. Men have faced a firing squad for less than that."

"Cunnel, treason doesn't talk out loud. It whispers an' slinks. Cald's mighty pop'lar in the army. His boy leads the singin', of which I'm free to say I'm damn tired of hearin'. But the men like it. Every man in the army would like to rub out our spy prisoner. But they'd be willin' to swap him for Cald. Next time we catch him there won't be no swappin'. Gineral Hull don't know what's been goin' on here. You do. I'm keen to do business with you."

McArthur stared out a window toward Detroit. Peevy began to fear his presence was forgotten. Suddenly the colonel said:

"Cald's a stout fighter. A good man. And his boy is here. I'll write a line, offering to exchange their murderous beast for our rifleman. You will wish to carry it, I assume."

Armed with the colonel's written proposal, Peevy hastened away to find Gutherie and procure a horse. Young Cald held him up and demanded—

"What's this talk about that pap of mine bein' caught by the Britishers?"

"Gospel truth, son. I'm goin' to git him loose. We're swappin' the bloody murderer for him."

The lad was ill at ease, and found it hard to speak. Finally he said:

"I reckon I'll go along. Not that he's any pap to me, or ever can be. But he is a American soldier."

"Not bein' any kin of yours, you 'tend to mindin' your own business, young feller. He'd be a good father to you if you'd let him."

"After leavin' my mother!"

"Grown-ups sometimes have trouble atween theirselves that younkers can't understand. I quit home without 'zactly sayin' where I was goin'. My little woman sends a writin', franked through by the War Department, darin' me to come home. That's personal atween she an' me. If I had a son, an' he tried to hoe in, he'd be out of luck. I opine it was Tom Jefferson who said a cub of a boy should never try to teach his pap, or gran'pap, how to suck eggs. But some children still think they can do it."

In another five minutes he and

Gutherie were in the saddle and riding for Fort Malden. This defense was just north of Amherstburg, where dwelt the renegade, Simon Girty, of awful memory. The two men made a dark camp that night near a cranberry bog below Turkey Creek. Early next morning they resumed their journey, and before they had covered a mile they were sighted by Indians. Holding steadily on, with the red men moving through the growth on their left, they came to the Canard and discovered that the Indians had cut in behind them. Peevy tied a white rag to the muzzle of his long rifle, boldly entered the British camp on the bank of the Detroit and informed an officer of his mission.

The officer courteously offered to accompany them so they might not be delayed; by midday they dismounted outside the Fort Malden works. Indians now appeared in considerable numbers and pressed close, their eyes glittering with hate, until one recognized the silver ornament at the neck of Peevy's hunting shirt. Their escort, knowing nothing about Tecumseh's talisman, hurried them inside the works and into the presence of the commandant, Colonel St. George.

Peevy presented McArthur's missive. The commandant scanned it and then remarked—

"Your General Hull doesn't seem to know what to do with Canada, now he is here."

"This chunk of land now is a part of the Territory of Michigan," said Peevy, gravely. "Already traders from Connecticut are on the way here with their wooden oats. I've got a hoss down home what fed on them, an' his ribs turned into barrel staves."

The commandant smiled grimly and reread the letter.

"You wish to exchange Captain Ween for a private soldier?" he mused.

"We want to swap a bloody murderer for a white man. Do we trade?"

The colonel pursed his lips and pondered over the proposition. He had noticed Peevy's quick, darting glances, which were taking in every weakness in the works. He replied:

"As you come under a flag and must be allowed to return, and as you will report all you have seen, I suppose it's best that I let the prisoner return with you and hope to even your discoveries by those our spy must have made. I am relying on Colonel McArthur's honor that our spy will be brought here unharmed."

"He will be delivered whole an' alive. But later on, after I've met him, he will be blind an' deef forevermore," gravely said Peevy.

Inside of three minutes Cald was led forth and was told he was free to depart with his friends. He glanced about and said:

"Had a notion a flag would be sent. Had a notion the boy might ride along with it."

"He honed to; but as a soldier an' not as a son."

Cald bowed his head and asked:

"Why bother to come for me? Just means I've got to start all over in tryin' to git myself killed."

At dusk they crossed the Canard. Glancing back, Cald exclaimed—

"Never see such big shootin' stars!"

"Them's signal rockets," ominously corrected Peevy. "Enemy's knockin' coals from the devil's pipe."

CHAPTER VII

BETRAYAL

THE fall of Mackinac shattered Hull's morale. On his march north he had sent to Ohio and Kentucky for reenforcements and supplies, and none had come. He knew, as all veteran border men in the army knew, that swift messengers from Mackinac were radiating to all the red towns as far south as the Maumee, calling the red warriors to carry torch and ax against Chicago, Malden and Detroit. From the east came a frightened runner, loudly crying that a Canadian army and many Indians were hastening to the succor of Malden. Major Chambers and his British soldiers, with much artillery, were debarking at the west end of Lake Ontario, and would advance toward Detroit as far as the Thames.

To fill Hull's cup of despair and add greatly to his worry was the report that Colonel Proctor had arrived at Malden

from the Erie. From Sandwich came an intercepted letter which furnished the capsheaf for Hull's pessimism. It purported to have been sent from Fort William, two days after the fall of Mackinac, and announced that twelve hundred men and several hundred Indians had come forward to the defense of Canada. In an optimistic summary the epistle avowed that within two days from the date of the letter more than five thousand fighting men would be crowding down over the Canadian border.

To add to the unfortunate commander's troubles, he believed there was a decidedly mutinous spirit sweeping through his army.

"If he was old Bonaparte hisself he'd be fussed up over all these stories," Peevy told his mates.

From mail captured by the enemy on the Ecorces River, the weakness of Hull's situation, as written by his officers and private soldiers to friends in the States, was fully revealed. The American army needed supplies, and Hull could not send a suitable escort to bring them from Ohio to Detroit. The mutinous spirit, of which Hull had complained, now came to the knowledge of all the rank and file.

Soldiers, grouped about headquarters, could hear the loud talk and unseemly arguments between the general and his staff. Yet the council of field officers prevailed upon the general to march at once against Malden. The gloom vanished before the great joy over this aggressive move. Yet that evening, the high hopes fell from the mountain peaks of confidence into the slough of despondency.

Peevy, loitering close by the open door of the Babie mansion, was the first to bring the news from headquarters to his waiting mates.

"Alongside the misery in my mind," he groaned, "a black heifer would look as bright as a silver star."

"What is it?" demanded the elder Cald. "Don't we march?"

"Yeh. We march," sighed Peevy.

"Then stop your croakin'. All's well an' happy as fleas on my houn' pup!" rejoiced Abe Gutherie.

"Yeh. We're marchin', all right," lugubriously continued Peevy. "But it's back to Detroit."

"Thunderation!" exclaimed Bills, the cook. "To Detroit? An' leave these poor people to pay the shot for believin' that Hull meant what he said when he promised to protect 'em if they didn't take up arms agin us?"

"Silence, there!" barked an infuriated officer.

Young Jim Cald paused beside Peevy long enough to plead:

"It ain't true! It can't be true! Tell me it ain't."

"What ain't true, son?"

"That honest an' truly we're goin' to let ourselves be penned up in Detroit."

"As the world looks to a feller who's standin' on his head, that's the way the land seems to slant now, son." Peevy sighed.

"He oughter be shot!"

"Young fool! Keep that yawp shut, or *you'll* be shot," warned Peevy. "Start 'Sinclair's Defeat' to cheer up the boys."

"After most of us be dead an' sculped I'll write a new song about this rotten campaign." Tears of rage and mortification were blinding him as he blundered away.

Cald excitedly told Peevy:

"He crowded agin me! He clung hold of my arm."

" 'Nough to gag a maggot way things is run in this blunderin' army," growled Peevy. "This business will blow the roof off of some politicians."

"He gripped my arm! Oh, Lawd! If I could believe he done it, knowin' who he was clingin' to!"

"Grabbed your arm?" asked Peevy absent mindedly.

"Almost scrunched the flesh, his hand is that strong. I'd never made a yip if he'd torn it plumb off. If I could believe he knew whose arm he was a-grippin'!"

Becoming more objective, Peevy soothingly said:

"Mebbe he did. Who knows?"

Cald slowly shook his head, the light dying from his eyes. He said:

"You be a right proper sort of a man, Peevy. Smart as they make 'em. See here. Can't you trick him into ridin' express down to the Ohio? Tell him he's to fetch up more men. I must save

him for his an' his mother's sake. You'll do that for me, old friend?"

Peevy clapped a sympathetic hand on Cald's shoulder and in a low voice said:

"He'd git snagged afore he could cover ten miles. He must take his luck along with us. Can't no harm happen to him. Injuns now know we're all scared. From every point of the compass they're comin' in to make a killin'. Inside of twenty-four hours every trail leadin' south will be blocked. Dawggone! My old white mare, blind in her good eye, could lead us better than Old Fuss an' Feathers!"

The group became silent as Hull and his staff rode by. The men could hear the officers violently differing with their general as to the wisdom of allowing themselves to be cooped up in the worthless stockade across the river. They heard Hull, when he insisted:

"I tell you that even now Brock is nearing Malden with heavy reenforcements. We must secure a permanent communication between this army and our source of supplies in the Ohio settlements."

IN THE darkness of the evening of August 7th and in the morning of the 8th, the troops made the crossing and went into camp behind the walls of the useless fort. Hull promptly ordered six hundred men, under Colonel Miller, to open the road to the Raisin River. When Colonel Miller requested all men who feared the enemy to step from the ranks, none moved. Others, not included, sought to join the column. From every quarter of the camp men were crying:

"I won't stay! I won't stay!"

The detachment marched away. Fourteen miles below the river the column was ambushed by British troops aided by Tecumseh and his warriors. Of the attacking party only the Indians remained. And they broke and fled before an impetuous charge once they learned their leader had been wounded in the neck. News of this encounter and the route of the attacking party reached the gloomy army in the evening, when a courier arrived with Miller's request for provisions. To his amazement and great anger Miller was ordered to turn about and return to Detroit.

Peevy, on learning this, told Cald in an undertone:

"Reckon this ends it, as the turkey said when he caught the grasshopper by the legs. Not enough of us here to make a good bag for the enemy, so he calls Miller back. If the redcoats would kindly wait, he'd write down to the States and ask all loyal folks to come up here an' surrender with him. In that way he'd have enough for a mess."

"It's all over," whispered Cald. "Find Abe Gutherie an' the boy an' git 'em to escape with you. I'll trail along behind you, but not close 'nough to fuss the boy."

Peevy started out to find young Cald. The plan to desert from an army, which must soon surrender, appealed to him as being thoroughly logical. Muttering under his breath, he gained the front of the fort and began a search of the river bank. He announced aloud:

"I never went for to be a surrenderman. No Peevy ever surrenders. Hi, young Cald! Come here!"

Mocking laughter from one of the darkened houses rewarded his efforts. Peevy spun about as if hearing the song of a rattlesnake. A clear falsetto, a voice that Peevy had never forgotten, was singing in French the "Song of the Eldest Daughter." It was the Merry Andrew.

Searching with ears and eyes, Peevy endeavored to gain time for locating the murderer by giving back the song in English. And he wished mightily that Gutherie, or Cald, could have been at hand to make a search as he sang.

An instant before the bow-string twanged he dropped to the ground. He felt the feathered shaft pass close to his head. He rolled swiftly down the bank until he could gain the protection of a beached boat. By that time the hidden singer had changed his hiding place and either was retreating or still intent on scoring a kill.

Peevy was as brave as a border man should be, but it sent a chill to his heart to know that a cold blooded assassin was in Detroit and bent on murder. He

feared the ruthless creature more than he did all the troops his Britannic Majesty ever landed in North America. He kept on his hands and knees until he was a pistol shot away from the boat and was close to a string of cooking fires. Cald was not in the first mess. Peevy briefly warned the men of the assassin's presence and circled the fire to seek young Cald at some other kettle.

"He's a dirty coward!" roared an Ohio backwoodsman. "He'll keep in hidin'—"

The crack of the rifle was so thin as almost to pass unheard. The backwoodsman coughed, as if clearing his throat, and then went down in a heap.

"Away from the light while he's reloadin'!" shouted Peevy, and he set the example by plunging into the darkness.

Then he rallied the men and led a long line sweeping up the bank and through the rough street in an effort to locate the assassin. But there was no more singing the "Song of the Eldest Daughter;" no more rifle bullets or arrows. Yet every man along the river bank kept away from the cooking fires while impatiently awaiting the dawn, when a search of every hiding place in Detroit could be made.

Peevy entered the stockade, where fires were burning, and paused at each to give warning of what bloody business might be forward. But the men were confident the assassin would scarcely dare to venture to the walls of the fort. They refused to extinguish the fires.

By the light of the flames Peevy reconnoitered farther and found young Cald sitting on a blanket, some untasted meat clutched in one brown hand, his head bowed as if in deep thought. Peevy would have dropped beside the lad and would have endeavored to coax him to join his father's mess, but he glimpsed tears on the tanned face in time to avert any betrayal of his discovery. He stepped back and cheerily greeted—

"Seem to be as snug as the Whitten triplets when they had to sleep in the same bed down home."

"Home!" repeated the boy, his tone wistful. "That's about the best word in our language."

"Bet your Sunday boots it is," heartily agreed Peevy. "But if I go to say it out loud I'd git to chokin' up as if catfish bones was crosswise in my throat. Makes me smell the bed of pennyroyal, an' hear the wind a-soughin' an' a-sighin' round our tight cabin, like some lost spirit a-tryin' to sing a danged lonesome tune. But come to my mess, where you belong."

"I don't seem to belong nowhere," muttered the boy.

"Now, now, son. I know how you feel. Way our gineral acts up is enough to make a hawg feel homesick. I'd shout with glee this second if I could see my little woman standin' about ten —better say twenty—feet away to give me a beggar's chance, with the fambly skillet in her small hand, an' hear her low voice sayin', 'You, Mister Peevy!' Dawggone if it don't make me feel homesick! Lawd! How I've abused that little woman by gaddin' round when I oughter be gittin' up the Winter wood. Bein' a patriot is fine, but it's mighty tough on the stay-at-homes. Your pap's out somewheres, black in his thoughts as the inside of a whale. An' that's prob'ly the blackest black there is. Why don't you come out an' sort of careless-like say, 'Hello, pap. Ain't this a dumb kind of a war?'"

"I haven't any pap."

Peevy knew when he was defeated. He now feared the tragedy of Cald's life never would end; nor the sorrow in the heart of the boy. All he could say was:

"It's a derned shame. It's somethin' that oughter be stopped an' cured for all time, everlastin'."

He startled his despondent young friend by suddenly throwing up the long rifle and firing at the window of a nearby cabin. Almost at the same moment there sounded a second report, but the lead flew wild; and the momentary glimpse of a narrow, pallid face at the cabin window caused him to believe his long search had ended.

With the snarl of a wild animal he dropped his rifle and yanked knife and ax from his belt and sped toward the cabin to hurl himself against the door. The portal was not barred and gave instantly, permitting him to roll inside.

TO BE CONTINUED

TRADERS

By W. C. TUTTLE

LACK of attention to details was the downfall of Ed French. He rode into the little town of Rio Bend at noon, dismounted in front of the Rio Bend Bank, dropped his reins and went into the bank.

The wooden sidewalk was under repair, and there was a twelve-inch step up to the threshold of the bank. The sheriff, in the doorway of his office less than a block down the street, saw French ride in and enter the bank.

French's leisurely entrance into Rio Bend, his unhesitating way of going straight to the bank, betokened a mere bank customer. But the sheriff's keen eyes registered the fact that he did not recognize the rider, nor did he recognize the horse. So, as a matter of precaution, he sauntered toward the bank.

Rio Bend was not a big place, but it drew patronage from an extensive cattle range. Tom White, cashier of the bank, looked up from his work and lined his two eyes exactly into the muzzle of a big revolver. The bookkeeper, being somewhat nearsighted, did not see that anything was wrong.

"Shell it out fast, feller," said French. "Here's a sack."

From inside the belt of his chaps he drew out a small canvas sack, which he shoved to the frightened cashier. It was all over in a few moments, and French was backing toward the front door. French was a deadly revolver shot and, when Tom White made a move as if to reach for a gun, French fired once and the cashier dropped. The concussion of the .45 shook the bank.

As French fired he took one backward step. He had forgotten that twelve-inch drop at the doorway, and that backward step threw him off balance. It was like stepping into a hole in the dark, and he went flat on his back, striking his right elbow on the end of a two-by-four, which caused him to drop his gun.

About three seconds later the sheriff landed on him, like the proverbial ton of brick, knocked all the breath out of his body, and a few moments later Mr. French was securely handcuffed. Except for that forgotten twelve-inch drop, Ed French would probably have killed the sheriff and made his getaway.

A crowd quickly gathered at the bank, and after a few moments the sheriff rushed the dazed outlaw down to the jail and locked him in a cell. The sheriff hurried back to the bank to get more of the details.

French, groggy and bruised, recovered quickly. He soon decided that the Rio Bend jail was made to hold prisoners. French was no fool. He knew his own ability with a gun, and he didn't need any one to tell him that he had shot the cashier between the eyes.

But that was small satisfaction. He knew what Rio Bend would do to him—that he would be lucky ever to be judged by a jury.

He could hear the sheriff arguing with some men in front of the office. Some

one said something about the boys using their own ropes, and the sheriff replied:

"If the law don't soak him, boys—that's different. If they don't, I'd be the last to block justice."

The sheriff meant that if the law miscarried, there would be nothing to stop the citizens from administering justice. It was a gloomy outlook for Ed French, who was a brave killer in the open, but a rat in a corner.

HE WAS sitting on the cot, trying to scheme out his next move, when the sheriff came and looked at him through the bars. French's eyes narrowed as he looked at the big, hard faced officer. Suddenly his eyes snapped wide open and he drew a deep breath.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he exclaimed. "Allen! So you did git out in the big break, eh? Let's see-e-e. Twenty-five years, wasn't it, Allen? Twenty-five years in the Big House. Montana's guest. Accordin' to my figures, you've still got about fifteen yet to serve."

The big sheriff's eyes narrowed and the lines of his face seemed to deepen, but he remained silent, studying the face of the killer.

French laughed leeringly.

"Kinda shocked you, eh? Didn't expect your old friend, Eddie French, to show up, didja? Hell, you didn't expect to ever see any of your old friends down here, eh? Servin' twenty-five years for a killin', bust loose and git to be a sheriff. Damned if this ain't funny! Why don'tcha laugh, Allen? Laugh with your old friend!"

"Is it funny to you?" asked the sheriff softly.

"Funny?" French threw back his head and laughed. "It's shore funny to me." He leaned forward and chuckled. "I suppose you've told all the folks around here that you're an escaped convict. Oh, yea-a-ah, you'd tell 'em!"

"I never killed Jack Arden," said the sheriff slowly.

"No? The jury and the judge thought you did. It don't make no difference whether you was guilty or not; you got sent over the road for it."

French got up and came closer to the bars.

"What are you goin' to do about it?" he asked softly. "I've got you where the hair is short, Sheriff. You play the game my way, or I talk out loud, see? They may dangle me on a rope, but I'll send you back where you belong, that's a cinch."

The sheriff seemed to be thinking deeply, and the killer laughed at him. Some one called from the front of the office, and the sheriff walked out there. French heard the visitor call the sheriff by the name of Jones, and he heard him mention the sheriff's wife. He said something about his wife's not coming home until the next day. The man asked him a question about the shooting, but French was unable to hear the sheriff's answer.

But the fact that the sheriff had a wife was good news to French. Finally the officer came back.

"So you got married, eh?" French grinned. "How'd she like to know all about you, Allen?"

The sheriff remained silent.

"They call you Jones down here, eh? Well, that's as good as any name. Sheriff Jones. Well, why the hell don'tcha say somethin'?"

"What is there to be said?" queried the sheriff softly.

"Allen, you're not anybody's damn fool," said French seriously. "Me and you are goin' to make a deal."

"Deal?"

"You're damn right—a deal. I'm goin' free and you can keep right on bein' Sheriff Jones. Is it a deal?"

The big sheriff sighed deeply and looked down the corridor.

"Don't talk so loud," he cautioned.

"All right. As soon as it's dark, I'll hightail it out of here, eh?"

"You're makin' a one-sided deal," said the sheriff.

"You fool, the deal is all on my side."

"No," replied the sheriff, "I can shoot you down, make it look like you attacked me, and everybody will say it's all right."

French's grin was a grimace.

"You could—yes; but you won't."

"Why won't I? You're only a dirty killer. You murdered one of my best friends today. You ain't got a ghost of a chance. I'd be lucky to keep you for

trial."

"All right," snarled French. "You can keep me here, but you can't stop me from talkin'."

"No, I can't stop you from talkin'. I've been sheriff here for more than two years, and I'm respected. You can ruin me, ruin my family, I'll admit that. But I'm not makin' any one-sided deal, French."

"You won't, eh? You'll make a deal my way."

"How many terms have you served, French?"

"Just that one; two years for horse stealin'."

"It should have been life—for murder."

"Huh? What murder?"

"Jack Arden."

French laughed shortly.

"So that's what sticks in your craw, eh? You think I killed him, do you?"

"I'll always believe you did."

French folded his arms and leaned against the bars, his leering face close to the sheriff.

"No matter who killed Arden, you went up for it, Allen. Let's talk about that deal. Why, damn it, you've got to trade with me! Suppose they throw you out of office for bein' careless. Ain't it better than losin' everythin'—and goin' back *there?*"

"I've got everythin' to lose if I don't play the game your way," replied the sheriff. "I'll lose my family, lose everythin' I own, and they'll send me back to finish that term. On the other hand, you'll hang. I'll still be alive—but you won't. And if I turn you loose, you'll still hold your knowledge over my head. You ain't above blackmail, French. I'd always live in fear of you comin' back and demandin' things. Oh, I know your kind. That's why I won't trade."

"Aw, I won't never bother you, Allen."

"The word of a horsethief and a murderer. No, I won't deal."

"But, you poor fool, use a little sense."

The sheriff shook his head slowly.

"I'll take my chance. It's better than an even bet that before midnight a mob will take you out of here and hang you to a tree. I'll do my best to protect you, but my gun will be empty. And when that mob comes, your voice won't be heard. Tom White was one of the best liked men in this country; and the folks of Rio Bend don't like murderers."

French knew that the sheriff spoke the truth, but he was not whipped yet.

"You've got to send me a lawyer," he stated shakily. "I've got that right. I know somethin' about the law."

"That front door will be locked all the time," replied the sheriff, "and there ain't a lawyer in Rio Bend that would dare defend you."

"That's a lie. They've got to defend me. I'm an American and the law gives me some rights."

"You're a dirty murderer."

"So are you! The law said you was. You send for a lawyer."

The sheriff laughed at him.

"We're not dealin' in law, French. This is between me and you. You killed Jack Arden, threw the blame on Jim Allen, and he went up for twenty-five years. No matter what the law said—you was the murderer. Do you think I'm goin' to turn you loose, save your dirty neck, after what you've done? I'd rather go back there and serve that time than to know a rat like you was loose, ready to blackmail me again. There's only one way I'm safe from you, and that's when you're dead. And if I know men, you'll be dead before midnight. And when that bunch of men come smashin' down through this corridor, your voice won't be heard. Them men won't be listenin' for any explanations nor alibis from you, French."

THE sheriff turned and walked away, leaving Ed French to think things over. And French realized that, in spite of his knowledge of the sheriff, he did not hold the whip hand. French knew that the mob would not listen to him. He had witnessed mob violence, and he knew what it would mean.

It was hot in that narrow cell. French wanted water, but there was no one to bring it to him. He was sore all over from his encounter with the sheriff, and he cursed the day he had come to Rio Bend. He watched the sunlight fade from his little barred window, and he

knew it would soon be sundown. Sundown—darkness—and the mob. French's throat ached already.

It was nearly dark when the sheriff brought his supper. But by that time French's mind was in no shape to dwell on food.

"Quite a crowd in town tonight," said the sheriff.

French came over to the bars, his face white and haggard.

"You've got to protect me," he said hoarsely.

"What are you whinin' about? The law won't be any easier on your neck than the mob would. Either way, you hang."

It was too much for French's nerves. He raved and cursed until the sheriff was afraid he had gone insane. But finally he calmed down, panting wearily. His voice had a husky whine when he said—

"Allen, I'll make you a trade."

"What kind of a trade?"

"Your kind of a trade. With the law, there's always a chance; but not with a mob. I'll trade with you for protection."

French came back to the bars, his eyes feverish as he gripped the steel rods.

"Protect me from the mob; give me a chance in court, Allen. It's your duty to do that, and you know it."

"What's your trade, French?"

The outlaw sagged against the bars for a moment.

"A confession," he said huskily. "A confession that it was me and not you who killed Jack Arden."

For a full minute the sheriff stood there silently, staring, thinking.

"God knows it won't—" French choked. "Is it a trade, Allen?"

The sheriff nodded.

"It's a trade. I'll do my best. They'll listen to me. You'll write that confession?"

"Bring me the paper and pen."

Thirty minutes later the sheriff sat down in his office, with the prosecuting attorney at his elbow, and read the full and more or less free confession of Ed French to the murder of Jack Arden at Lodgepole, Montana, nearly eleven years ago. French went into complete detail of just how he threw suspicion on Jim Allen.

"I'll wire the Governor of the State," said the attorney. "He can start the legal machinery to release your brother, Jim. You might wire the warden of the penitentiary, as long as you know him. We'll surrender French to the Montana authorities, because we could only give him a couple years for attempted robbery. It was a damn lucky thing that Tom White dropped when that bullet hit one of the bars on his window."

The sheriff nodded.

"It's lucky that me and Jim looked alike. You see, I knew a lot about that case, but I wasn't there in Lodgepole. I wouldn't have knowed French from a raw cowhide; but he was so damn glad to recognize me as Jim Allen that he gave the whole thing away. He never knowed my name was Jones Allen. Well, let's get them telegrams away; I'll shore be glad to see Jim."

"Are you goin' to tell French?"

"I've done told him." The sheriff grinned.

"You did? What did he say?"

"Nothin'—jist fainted."

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

A COMRADE from the Argentine says a few words on the subject of fingerprinting in his country:

Buenos Aires, Argentine

I read in your October 15th Camp-fire: "The modern system of fingerprinting was invented by Sir E. R. Henry of Great Britain".

Perhaps Mr. A. Geary Johnson is right in giving this name of the inventor of the modern fingerprinting. But what I can tell you from sunny Buenos Aires concerning fingerprinting is the following: In the years 1906-1907, I heard very much of a modern system of fingerprinting invented by a scientist of La Plata (fifty kilometers from Buenos Aires itself and capital of the province of Buenos Aires), named Vucetich. This fingerprinting system was put into use by the police of Argentina specially by the police of Buenos Aires. The advantages in the normal life of having a *cedula de identidad* (identity booklet) were so numerous and important that I got mine in the year 1912, (perhaps February) and this booklet had the number 38,036. That says that prior to me, 38,035 persons had come to the central office of Buenos Aires and had had their fingerprints registered by the police and the fingerprint of the big finger of the right hand put into the identity booklet.

Now in the year 1932, the total number of identity booklets delivered in Buenos Aires alone, by the police, since the beginning of the system, with the corresponding fingerprints in the police archive, ascends to more than 1,200,000 (one million two hundred thousands).

–LUIS J. SIDLER

THE daughter of the originator of that notable outing dish, Virginia Brunswick stew, kindly sends in the authentic recipe therefor:

Montpelier, Ohio

Adventure asks about a recipe for Virginia Brunswick stew. The "Blue Grass Kentucky Cook Book" has the original recipe of my father's, Francis Baker Blanton, of Cumberland County, Virginia, near Farmville railroad station. It was printed in "Kentucky Housekeeping in the Blue Grass" in 1879. I will tell you how he made this stew which always drew crowds of people from afar.

He made it for Sunday School picnics, for

grange picnics and such meetings of all day importance. A table was arranged, made of three wide boards in U shape and the waiters stood inside the enclosure. The guests stood all around. Father chose a shady grove and had three big iron kettles full of stew. A dozen trustworthy colored men and women came early and prepared the vegetables and stirred the stew.

VIRGINIA BRUNSWICK STEW

For a large family three gallons of water, to which add two chickens, which have been cut up, and one pound of fat bacon. The bacon must be cut up very fine before putting it in the water. As soon as the chickens are sufficiently cooked for the meat to leave the bones, take them out, and separate the meat from the bones. Return the meat to the water, then add half a gallon of Irish potatoes which have been boiled and mashed, one and a half pints of green corn cut off, one pint of green butter beans, one quart of tomatoes which have been skinned, and a good sized loaf of light bread. Season with black and red pepper, salt and butter. The bread must not be put in until the stew is nearly done. As soon as it begins to thicken it must be constantly stirred until it is done. If it should be too thick, add more water. Much depends on the judgment of the person who makes it. When properly made, no one is able to detect any of the ingredients. Squirrels are a very good substitute for chickens.

CHICKENS and squirrels were prepared the day before—chickens preferred. The bacon was a streak of lean and a streak of fat. There was nothing ground up. Potatoes were boiled, mashed and seasoned with butter and salt. Corn was sliced down and then cut off. Butter beans were sliced in two pieces; tomatoes stewed and seasoned with butter, salt, pepper and a little sugar. When nearly done, all ingredients were thoroughly cooked. The bread was crumbed and added last; also butter, red and black pepper and salt to taste. It was served in soup plates with crackers. But it was not like soup, as it was a delicious stew and nothing else was needed.

The stew was free to all. My father's neighbors furnished all the materials, and if they brought more chickens than they were asked for, he had them put in the stew. There was only spring water served with the stew. The water was brought from a spring down the hill, a colored woman bringing one bucketful in each hand and one on her head, never spilling a drop. Gourds were use in those days, hung from the bucket, so every one could drink whenever thirsty. These gourds would be a curiosity now —home grown and scooped out after having a part taken off and seeds removed. A long handle was on every gourd.

My father never trusted the cooking of the stew to his helpers. He stood among them from early morning till noon, supervising and tasting, since too much salt would ruin it. He did not like onions in it. I can see him now in my mind's eye: the adored Southern gentleman, always immaculate in his starched-bosom shirt, with a shirt stud from the Sandwich Islands—onyx surrounded by brilliants—owned by his wife's father, Rev. John Diell, who went to Honolulu in 1832 and preached to the seamen. The latter had built the first frame building in the Islands. He and my grandmother went around Cape Horn and were six months sailing on their wedding journey from New York to Honolulu. After his death the natives carried stones in their hands and built a monument to his memory. The monument has an iron fence around it now.

The Seamen's Chapel still has its minister and gives a Comfort bag to every sailor at Christmas. This contains a Testament, scissors, needles, thread and buttons, and a card or a letter from friends in the States.

I had the stud made into a pin and gave it to my youngest son, John Diell McCluer, now in Winston-Salem, N. C. The colored people never left my father after they were freed. When he died they all attended the funeral, walking several miles to do so. They said they "worshipped the ground Mars' Bake trod on."

I lived in Virginia near Appomattox Courthouse where General Lee surrendered.

—ANNA BLANTON MCCLUER

A SUPPLEMENTARY note from Hugh Pendexter on a point of historical interest arising in his serial, "The Bunglers", now running in our magazine.

Norway, Maine

The wild hogs described in "The Bunglers" are on stage legitimately. At and around Detroit and across the river in lower Canada, enormous number of hogs were raised. Many of these escaped and went native and multiplied. In Lossing's history of the 1812 war the name of Hog Island is explained as resulting from the great number of wild porkers to be found there. They were hunted as wild game. Pork was an important item on the northern boundary and in Canada. It was the principal article of diet taken along by the various fur-brigades and was so commonly used as a staple that Americans called their Canadian confrères in the fur game "Pork Eaters" and "Lard Eaters".

—HUGH PENDEXTER

ANOTHER translation of the Gaelic inscription on the shield of the O'Sullivans.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

May I be permitted to add my quota to the current Camp-fire controversy about the Gaelic motto of the O'Sullivan family?

Mr. Donal O'Sullivan has requested some reader to put him right on the correct translation, and I believe I have a sufficient knowledge

of Gaelic to do so.

The literal translation of "Lamb Foistinneach an Uachtar" is "The Cool Hand Uppermost". The adjective Foistinneach being derived from the noun Foistine (calm, sedate, serious).

The only authoritative coat of arms depicting a red hand is that of the family of O'Neill of Ulster, and the correct motto is "Lamh Dearg Abu" or "The Red Hand to Victory".

—PETER J. NOLAN

WRESTLER vs. boxer: The question as to the ultimate victor in a mixed bout, as seen from the viewpoint of a man who has boxed professionally.

New York, New York

In your issue of November 15th, 1932, I read with great interest the inquiry of Mr. Lewis O. Barton, Clifton, Texas, *re* wrestling and the answer of Mr. Charles B. Cranford thereto. No doubt Mr. Cranford is a wrestler and has answered strictly from a wrestling viewpoint. May I answer the same inquiry from the viewpoint of one who has boxed professionally and otherwise for 20 years? I believe I can refute some of Mr. Cranford's statements.

It would be unfair to pit an experienced wrestler against a novice at boxing and vice versa to prove the supremacy of one sport over the other. So I'll assume in a duel of skill both contestants are equal in physical fitness and knowledge of their respective professions. The boxer would win! It has been proven many times in the past. I present some examples to bear out my statement.

FRANK GOTCH, one of the greatest heavyweight wrestlers of modern times, and a champion, at the peak of his career went to Alaska on a tour. While there, a match was arranged between him and Frank Slavin, a former heavyweight boxer, old and long past his fighting peak. Slavin, while never a champion boxer, was rated pretty high in his heyday. He knocked Gotch out in several rounds.

Bob Fitzsimmons, who I believe was the greatest fighter of modern times, holder of three championship titles, middleweight, light-heavy and heavyweight, used wrestling as a part of his training routine. One day to prove his contention boxing was superior to wrestling in effectiveness, he took on Ernest Roeber, a heavyweight wrestling champion, who outweighed Fitzsimmons by many pounds, with the result when Fitz hooked him on the chin, Roeber was unconscious and could not be revived for many minutes.

Wayne Munn, who for a short time was a heavyweight champion of the wrestlers, was knocked out many times by fifth-rate boxers.

Jack Sharkey, now heavyweight champion of the world, boxed Primo Carnera, a reformed wrestler. Although outweighed by 60 pounds, and by far inferior in strength of the two, Sharkey administered to Carnera the shellacking of his career, bruising, cutting, slashing and knocking him down to win a fifteen-round decision. Carnera's brute strength availed him nothing.

THE most striking example I can recall is one that occurred in Brooklyn about 15 years ago. Zulu Kid, a middleweight boxer of local renown, agreed to meet Henry Irslinger, a near-champion among the middleweight wrestlers. I believe this was one of the few times in the New York City area they allowed a boxer to meet a wrestler, both to use their own methods of offense and defense to determine who would be victorious. Again the boxer proved his supremacy over the wrestler by knocking him out in several rounds.

A boxer trains for endurance, strength and freedom from muscleboundedness. A wrestler's training routine is conducive to super-strength. He can not avoid this muscle bound condition due to his constant resisting exercises which build layer upon layer of muscle over his entire body, causing a rigidity and lack of suppleness of the neck which would prove his downfall in a fight with a boxer. A sharp blow delivered to the wrestler's head would cause a tremendous shock to his entire nervous system and a series of blows delivered in such a manner would eventually end the encounter.

PICTURE for yourself a contest between the two athletes:

The bell rings. They advance to the center of the ring. The wrestler while feinting for a hold receives sharply delivered left jabs to the face causing a discoloration and closing of the eye. A series of jabs would eventually close both eyes, lacerate the lips and bleed the nose. He plunges in wide open and receives a right cross to the jaw and a left hook to the same place. He tries to get inside and is raked with terrific uppercuts to the chin and I can not recall anyone who could stand up under such punishment.

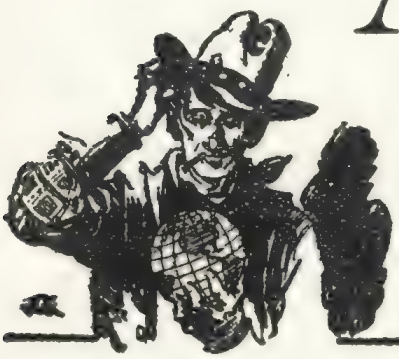
I could not imagine a Londos getting in close on a Dempsey and taking Jack's right hand to the chin and still stand up. I can not see how a Lumbering Lewis, a Diving Sonnenberg or McMillan could get past Tunney's bruising straight left and short right cross. Can you imagine any one of the above diving straight into a Dempsey hook? It would be suicide.

In my opinion wrestling is a marvelous sport and can be indulged in without any fear of bodily harm. It is a great body developer. But when it comes to an emergency and one must call upon his physical prowess, I would prefer to place my destiny in charge of a right cross or left hook in lieu of any wrestling hold known to modern wrestling science.

—DAN BRENNAN

PLEASE address all communications intended for this section to "The Camp-fire", care of the magazine.

ASK *Adventure*



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South Sea Islands

THE only wild animals are cattle, goats and pigs that have gone bush.

Request:—"1. Are there any wild animals on the Fiji Islands that will attack a person on sight? 2. Is there any trade carried on for the skins of the various animals of Fiji?"

—R. H. GRAY, Reco, Alberta

Reply, by Mr. Wm. McCreadie:—There are no large wild animals in the Fiji group, nor so far as I know in any other of the Pacific Southern Islands. The only "wild" animals are cattle, goats and pigs which have gone "bush" and which are hunted with the rifle. There is no trade therefore in any furs or skins except cattle hides, and these are not very profitable now, although shortly after the war the price paid was handsome and several whites made a living in Fiji by shooting cattle. They kept the hides and let the natives have the carcasses for food.

Boatswain's Pipe

IT USUALLY means there's work to be done.

Request:—"To what extent is the boatswain's pipe used on Navy boats? Is there much variation of tune possible with the official pipes in use on Naval vessels?"

—LOUIS M. HARVEY, JR, Pensacola, Florida

Reply, by Lt. F. V. Greene:—The calls are used to get the attention of men when "passing the word", for various signal purposes to the men—for instance when heaving on lines, etc—for piping officers who are entitled to the compliment over the side.

There are about four different tones to be obtained from a boatswain's pipe. It is quite a trick; it would not be a bad idea to take a trip to the Naval Air Station and get some boatswain's mate to show you how it is done. He may be known by crossed anchors, and two or more chevrons in his rating badge.

Everglades

RATTLERS, moccasins and poisonous mud.

Request:—"Just what are the Florida Everglades like? Is there much wild life in them?"

—VICTOR BREEDER, Chicago, Illinois

Reply, by Mr. Hapsburg Liebe:—A vast, wet plain, wetter in wet seasons. Dotted by "islands" a foot or so high, which are covered with trees and scrub palms, palmetto, bushes, etc, and cut up by sloughs, creeks, ponds, marshes, cypress and bay "heads." The Seminole name for the 'Glades is "Grassy Water," and it's a good name; there is grass almost everywhere, much of it being sawgrass. Too wet for much game, but there is game, more or less, around the edges. Cottonmouth moccasins abound. Rattlers on the drier land around the edges. Don't go far into the 'Glades without a guide; you'd soon be hopelessly lost. I knew one professional guide who was lost in there alone, and he was so far gone when at last he was found that he died. Exposure, starvation, and foot poison—from the mud—did it.

Mukluk

SHAPED like a scow, and chewed into shape by Eskimo women.

Request:—"I understand that Eskimo boots are waterproof. How are they made? Is it possible to obtain a pair in the United States?"

—HORACE V. CAWTHORN, Louisville, Kentucky

Reply, by Mr. Theodore S. Solomons:—Eskimo boots used in Summer, Spring and Fall are waterproof. The general name is mukluk. They are made this way: A piece of narwhal, or white whale hide, or the thick, back skin of the ougruk, or large hair seal, without being tanned, is turned up all around its edge so that its shape is like that of a rather flat bottomed, shovel nosed scow, with the stern (heel) narrower than

the bow (toe). To effect the curve at heel and toe, while making the edge, the material is crimped with the teeth, so that the sides or, say, the upright parts of the rounded ends have vertical corrugations or creases about an eighth inch apart and petering out as they approach the flat sole. Lighter, untanned skin is used for the uppers, and the joint is made by the very clever sewing of the Eskimo women, who manage to keep the boot waterproof. The mukluk is kept snug to the foot by thongs sewed into the joint on either side near the heel. These draw forward and then cross and go back around the ankle. Sometimes the strings pass through loops on either side the toe, well back, and make a band across the front part of the foot like a snowshoe.

Write the Chamber of Commerce, Alaska Bureau, Seattle, for the names of dealers in Alaska mukluks. A few dollars will bring you a dandy pair, if they don't cheat you. These boots are the lightest possible, and wear very well in sloppy snow and wet ground. They are not used in Winter, when the "snow boot" is used, a cold weather footgear made in the identical manner, but with soft tanned sole and uppers, the latter having the fur left on.

Flying Cloud

DONALD McKAY'S masterpiece, the noblest clipper of them all.

Request:—"Can you tell me the date and dimensions of the *Flying Cloud?*"

—BERTRAM J. PARKE, Gamboa, Canal Zone

Reply, by Lt. Harry E. Rieseberg:—This vessel was one of the most beautiful clippers built by Donald McKay. She was 229.0 feet in length, 48.8 feet in breadth, and 21.6 feet in depth, with a registered gross tonnage of 1,782 tons. On her maiden voyage from New York to San Francisco she made a record passage of 89 days, in spite of mutiny among the crew, arriving in San Francisco on August 31, 1851. It is the sailing ship record of this day, a second time equalled by herself and a third time in 1860 by the clipper *Andrew Jackson.* In 1862 she was purchased by James Baines, of Liverpool, England, who bought her at a very low figure on account of the Alabama depredations. Later she passed into the hands of Henry Smith Edwards, one of the founders of Smith's Dock Company, South Shields, England.

In 1874 she ran aground on the coast of New Brunswick, and while being repaired on a slipway, she caught fire and was totally destroyed.

Tropical Forest

UP TO now the precious cabinet woods have been considered more important than general utility lumber.

Request:—"I would like the names of the trees that are the chief revenue earners in Mexico and Central America, and their distribution."

—JOHN P. PHILLIPS, Longview, Washington

Reply, by Mr. Wm. R. Barbour:—The regions close to the sea, both east and west, have been covered quite thoroughly, and exploited of their best timber, principally mahogany, Spanish cedar, cocobolo, rosewood, and similar precious cabinet woods. Tropical forests are always mixed stands. The most abundant species are usually the type which I call general utility woods, which partake of the general characteristics of temperate hardwoods. When their nature is better understood they will be more important than the scarce cabinet woods, for they can replace our waning supplies of oak, ash, hickory, etc.

Jungle Music

WILD and weird phonograph records.

Request:—"Can you tell me where I can buy phonograph records of African native music? I am going to buy a moving picture of African adventure and big game hunting, and book it through the smaller towns of the Middle West, using the African music for ballyhoo. The wilder and weirder the music the better."

—GEO. W. RAABE, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Reply, by Mr. N. E. Nelson:—The wildest and weirdest music which has been transposed to phonograph or gramophone records which I have ever heard are Hausa, Somali and Kru songs and dance music. Unfortunately I do not now have a catalogue of these records, but you can obtain one by writing to either the Gramophone Company, Ltd., Hayes, Middlesex, England; or Edison Bell, Ltd., Export Dept., 62, Glengall Road, London, S. E. 15—either of whom I am sure can supply you with African music which would be ideal for your purpose. Then, too, you might inquire of the Victor Talking Machine Corporation, at Camden, N. J, as to whether they have any purely African native orchestra records, but I doubt that they will have any without a tinge of Harlem.

Mexico

YOU'RE welcome if you have money to spend; otherwise, you are not.

Request:—"I shall be deeply indebted to you for any advice you might give me concerning employment conditions in your territory."

—JOHN NEWMAN, West Mansfield, Ohio

Reply, by Mr. John Newman Page:—Ask Adventure has a rule against replying to inquiries about employment, but I am going to break it in your favor. Partly because your name—as far as it goes—is exactly the same as my own. There is no chance for Americans to find work in Mexico now. The reason is that there are far too few jobs here to go around, and Mexicans, of course, are getting the preference. Should you come here and get caught looking for employment you would very probably be deported, just as a quarter of a million Mexicans have been deported from the United States during the present depression. If you are a tourist, with money to spend, you're welcome in Mexico. Otherwise, you're not. Most decidedly not!

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Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to this magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The expert will in all cases answer to the best of his ability, but neither he nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment. Ask Adventure covers outdoor opportunities, but only in the way of general advice.

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Motor Boating GERALD T. WHITE, Westlawn, Change Bridge, Montville, N. J.

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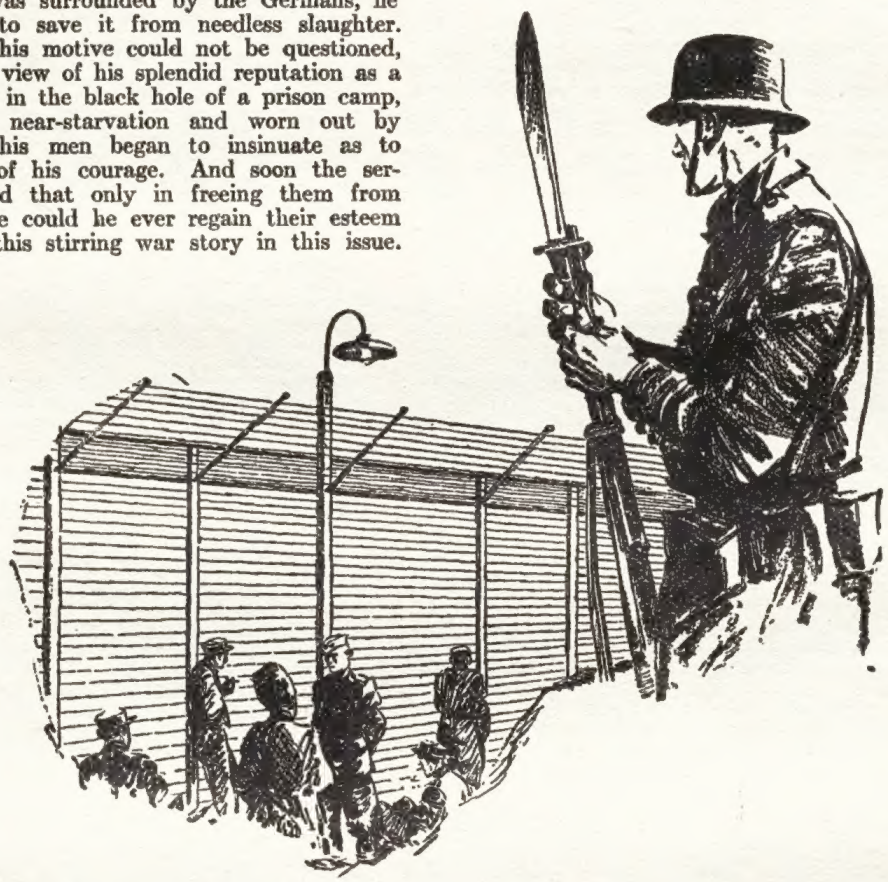

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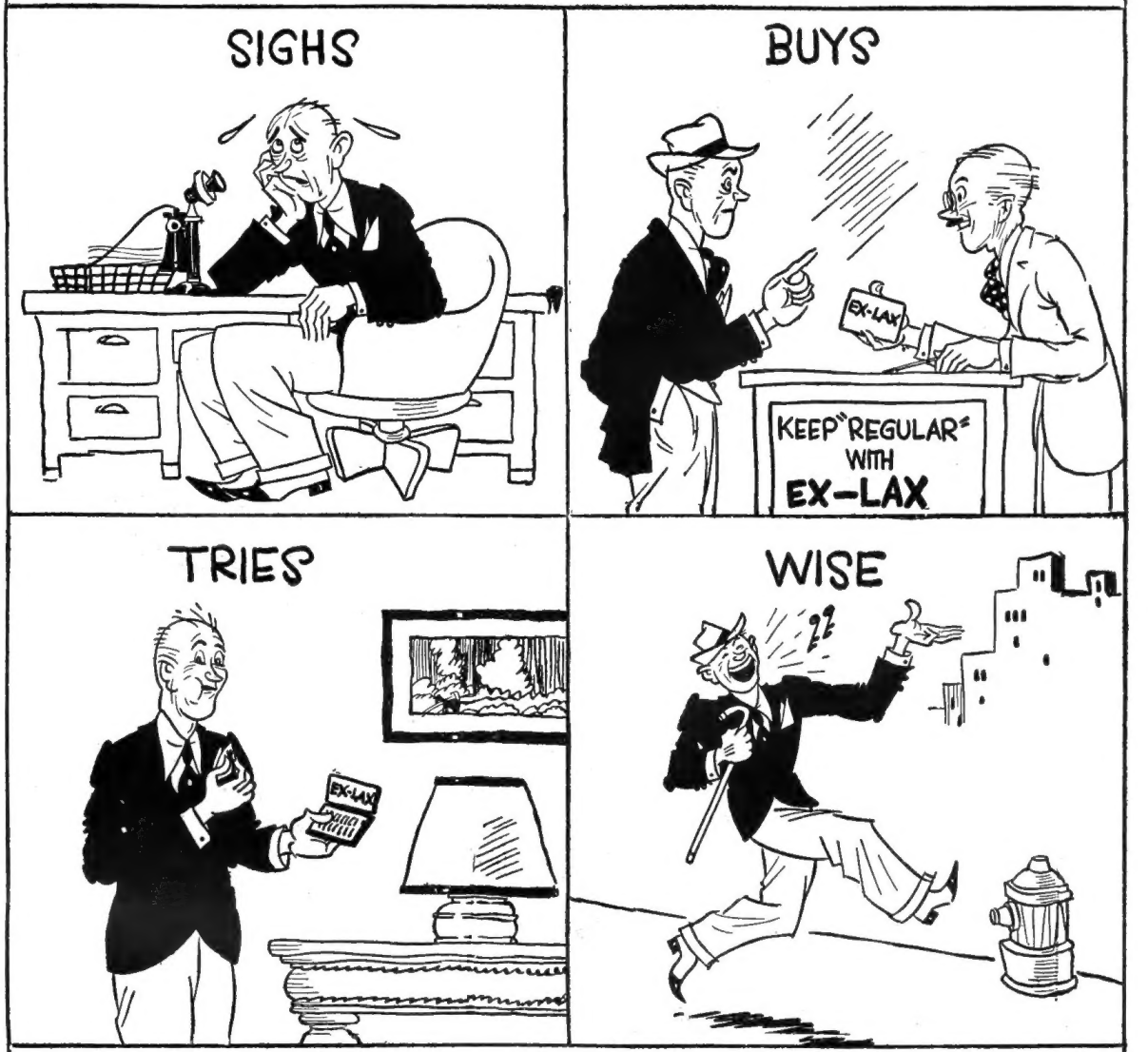

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